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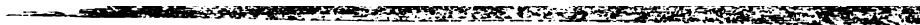
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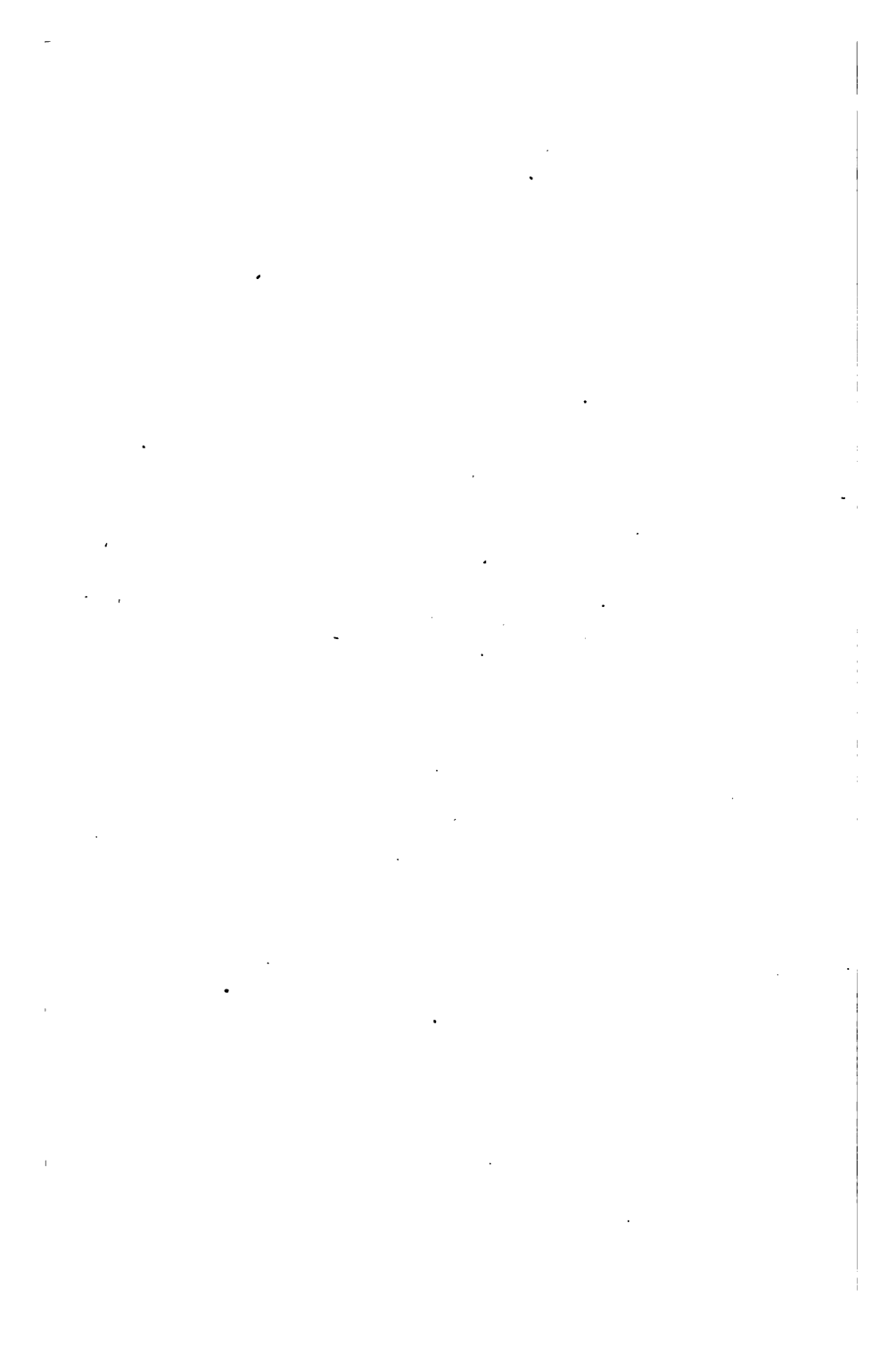
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A SUMMER'S ROMANCE.

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A

SUMMER'S ROMANCE.

BY

MARY HEALY,

AUTHOR OF "LAKEVILLE," "THE HOME THEATRE," ETC.



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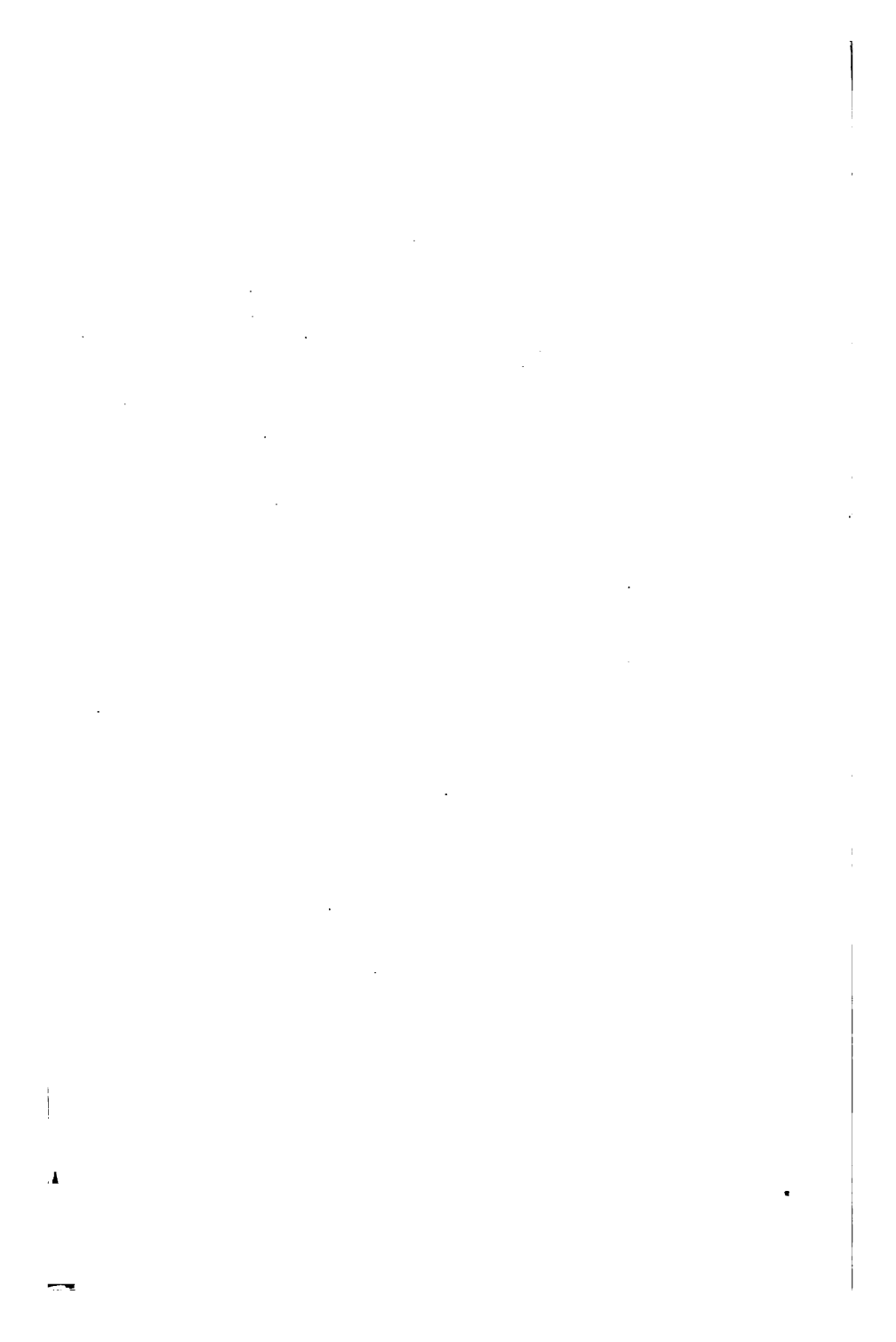
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To my dear Mother,

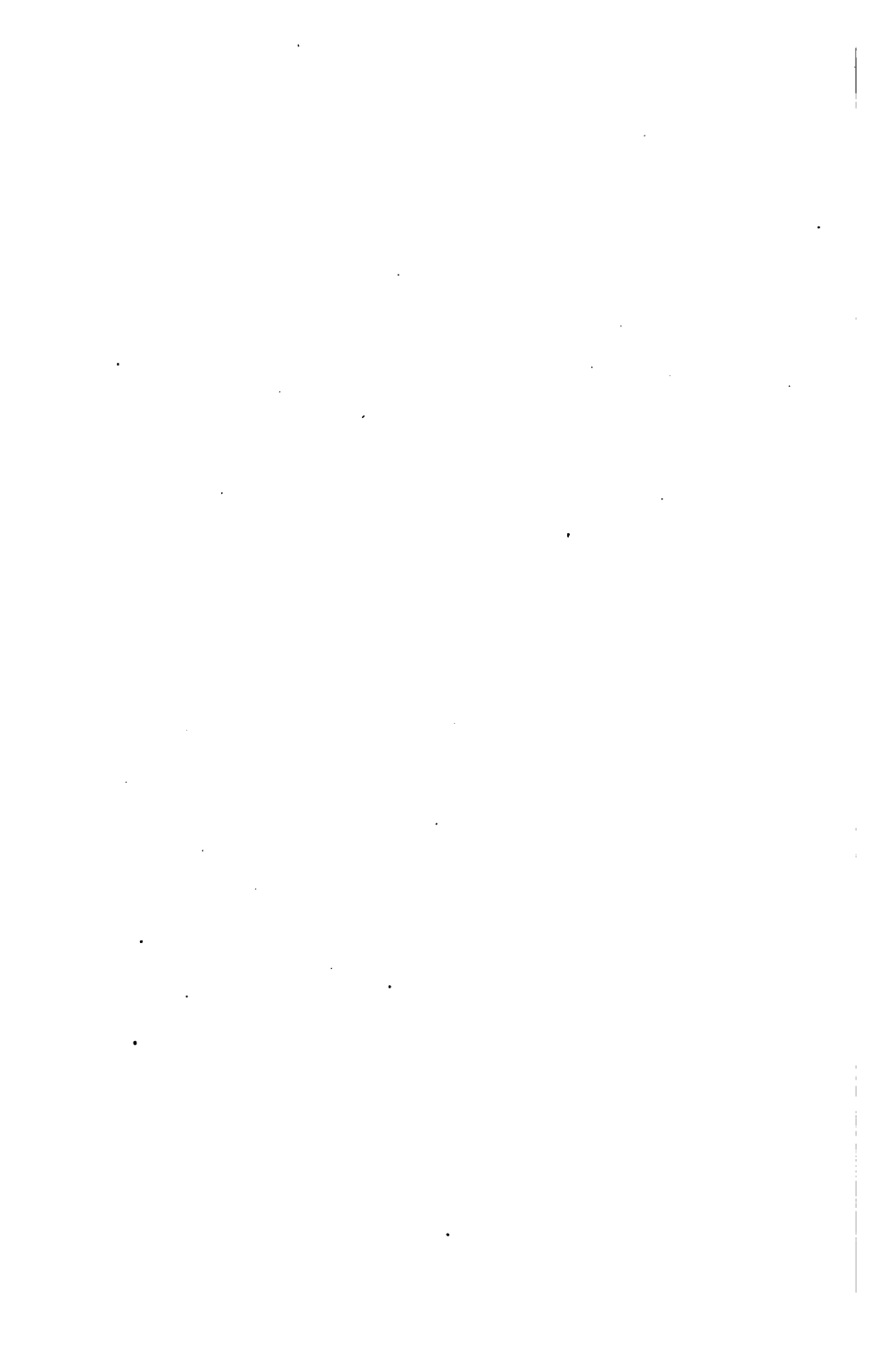
WHO HAS MADE THE WORD HOME, ONE OF SUCH

SWEET AND HOLY MEANING

TO HER CHILDREN.

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A SUMMER'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKS.

TO see, from one of the wild nooks of the broken coast of Capri, the sun set red and glowing behind the lovely island of Ischia, is one of those delightful sensations which remain imprinted on the mind. And, indeed, every thing conspires to make the impression deep and durable: imagine the perfect calm of a spring evening, broken only by the gurgling of the tiny waves as they die among the rocks, or (for I have a particular spot in view in this description) among those well-worn ruins which are still called "il bagno di Tiberio." These ruins are situated in a small irregular indentation of the shore, and are reached by a precipi-

tous foot-way leading down from the high wooded cliff which shuts in this delightful spot from the outer world. Rocks and fragments of the tyrant's palace walls—often indistinguishable one from another—lie scattered about, while in the clear water the outline of what was once the bath rises, a few feet above the surface, as if in mockery of its own past grandeur.

Then out at sea, melting in those thousand indescribable evening tints peculiar to southern climes, rises, to the extreme left, Ischia, while almost in a direct line one sees the dim outline of Naples, and finally Vesuvius looms up, with his eternal smoke-crown. To lie stretched out on the sand revelling in the marvellous beauty, displayed like a banquet before the hungry eyes, to drink in the sweet, soft air—to dream perhaps—that is certainly happiness.

One particular evening several persons might have been seen in this usually deserted nook. Seated in a *chaise-à-porteur*, was a woman apparently about sixty years of age; she had one of those faces that, once seen, is never forgotten; a face which retained some traces of a kind of haughty beauty, but whose chief characteristic now was unmitigated hardness. Her hair was almost white and contrasted strongly with her

dark complexion ; the lines of her face were deep and many, and those about the mouth seemed to tell of dreadful physical suffering. A terrible disease was killing her, and it was her pride to endure the cruel torture in stoical silence ; to pity her in her worst paroxysms of pain would have been to incur her bitterest displeasure, and Lady Thurlow's displeasure was a thing to be dreaded.

Half lying on the sand near the elder lady was a slight, pale girl ; a book was still in her hand, but she was no longer reading ; this was Lady Thurlow's companion, Miss Farland. At a little distance was a group of strong-looking, finely-made women, whose duty it was to carry the lady in her chair ; no easy task when, as to-day, they had to bring her down the precipitous, scarcely defined path which led to the little bay or *calle*. At Capri, women do all the work ; on one's arrival they seize the luggage, be it carpet-bag, or heavy trunk, swing it on to the much-enduring head, and walk up the steep path to the hotel, with a firm and regular step.

Presently a boat passed at no great distance from the shore, and Miss Farland bowed in acknowledgment to a salute from one of its occupants ; as she did so, a slight flush rose to

her pale cheeks and gave her face a transient look of something like beauty.

"Who is that?" asked Lady Thurlow in a harsh and grating voice, as she adjusted her eye-glass—too late, however, to catch any thing more than a glimpse of the boat as it glided behind a boldly projecting rock.

"I do not know the gentleman's name," composedly answered the girl. The flush had already passed away.

"And pray what right have you to bow to a strange man whose very name is unknown to you? As long as you are in my service, Miss Farland, I forbid any thing of the sort!"

"That you have no right to do." This was uttered as quietly as her last remark, without any alteration in the clear, fresh, somewhat cold-toned voice. Lady Thurlow's companion had raised herself from her recumbent position, and sat upright, her eyes fixed on the distant horizon. She was not pretty, her features were rather irregular, and she was very pale; her eyes were good, however, not large, but well shaped and full of a certain proud sadness which was not without its charm. Lady Thurlow looked at her, as she said those few quiet words, "That you have no right to do," with a menacing

glow in her black eyes; then, as she caught sight of the dreamy look, lost as it was in the dim distance, she suddenly checked the angry words which were on her lips, and a grim smile came to them instead; not an agreeable smile, but one which denoted a curious sort of pleasure; she continued to scan the girl's face for some moments in silence, then said,—

“What do you mean by saying that I have no right? Do I not pay you to have that right?”

“No; you pay me for my services, and those I give you as honestly as the shopman gives you a certain number of yards of flannel, for the money you offer him; but the shopman does not feel bound to add a piece of lace or ribbon to the flannel, does he? you get what you pay for, and no more; that is just. I give you my time, I read to you, I bear with your ill-humours as best I can, but I do not concede your right to interfere with my private actions.”

“Really, Louie, you are an eccentric sort of companion. Do you know, Miss, that if Anna Curtis, or any of your other predecessors had spoken to me like that, they would have been dismissed at once?”

"I dare say; and it is possible that you may treat me in like manner; but I think not: I suit you, and, to a certain extent, you suit me."

Lady Thurlow laughed; she seemed thoroughly to enjoy her companion's independence, expressed, as it was, in a quiet, self-possessed manner; but her laugh was as harsh as her voice.

"Well, then, since you will not yield to force, you will perhaps be good enough to yield to a request, and satisfy my curiosity with regard to that young man—I presume he is a young man?" she added sharply.

"Yes, he is young. I never saw him till yesterday. While you were lying down in the afternoon, I went out for a walk, lost myself, as a matter of course, among all those twisting paths, and finally climbed up some rocks to reconnoitre; but as I turned to go back I grew dizzy, for I was at a considerable height, and was forced to steady myself by clinging to some shrubs. Then this gentleman, whom I had not seen before, stepped up, asked my permission in English to help me down, and showed me the way back to the hotel. That is the whole history of our acquaintance."

"Really quite romantic!" sneered Lady

Thurlow; "and pray how came the gentleman to find himself so opportunely in your path?"

"He was sketching; I think he is an artist."

"Oh," remarked the lady, with indescribable scorn in her voice, "I thought you said your hero was a gentleman!"

"And so he is; of that I am sure."

Lady Thurlow's dark face grew darker still; she seemed to be wrestling with some hated thought; for the moment she was apparently oblivious of the girl at her side. Presently she exclaimed,—

"Gentleman—gentleman indeed! These are fine days, in very truth, when the natural and decent barriers of society are broken down; when the fine old word 'gentleman' is usurped by men who earn their bread with paint-brush, or pen, or chisel—why, it will be the turn of the shopkeepers next, I suppose! I have no patience with it! I see, in the future, England degraded, lost, by the terrible levelling theories of the age!"

Louie Farland did not answer; a slight raising of the eyebrows proved that she was too well accustomed to tirades of this kind to attempt any thing like retort. After a short pause Lady Thurlow continued,—

"This place is infested with painters! I came here expecting quiet, hoping to hear, to see none but those who honestly confess themselves peasants, who carry us, who do the work of beasts of burden, and who are grateful if they get a penny or two beyond their pay. But, instead of that, unless we come down here at the peril of our necks, we run the risk of seeing every where a painter's white umbrella—the very mushrooms of this much-vaunted civilization! Even here, it seems, we are not to be free from the nuisance!" Then, irritated by her companion's cool silence, she continued in a higher key, "Why do you not speak?"

"I did not know you expected an answer to what was no question. You know that I differ from you in every particular, and it is useless to commence an endless discussion."

"Of course you differ from me!" retorted the lady, with a short, grim laugh. "Of course you do, for you belong to the class of workers; you are, like those women yonder, a paid servant; they have to carry the weight of my body, you, the weight of my caprices."

"And you," answered Louie, dauntlessly, "have to carry the tyranny of your own dark nature, and are therefore more to be pitied than

those women, more to be pitied than your companion. They, once the fatigue of the day over, go to their companions, eat their macaroni, dance their tarantella, and are happy in their way. I, when once I shut my room-door, forget you and my servitude, and enter into a world of which you know nothing!”

Lady Thurlow, as she heard these words, seemed more on the point of a benignant smile than she had yet been. She delighted in the sudden waking up of this pale nature, as she sometimes called it—to see the cheeks flush, the eyes wake to positive beauty; but Louie’s excitement was short-lived, probably she guessed that her patroness merely wished to find a moment’s amusement in it, therefore she relapsed almost immediately into her quiet composure. But Lady Thurlow had not yet done with her; she continued, in a provokingly sarcastic tone,—

“‘A world of which I know nothing’! Perhaps, Miss Farland, my experience may at least suggest to me what beings people that world. However, you, it seems to me, should prove an exception to dreaming maidens; on what, pray, do you base your fancies? Yours has been, I take it, a prosaic life enough to have taught you common sense. Let us recapitulate: you are

nameless, homeless, unpoetic, almost plain in person, and out of your teens—you are twenty-four or five, are you not?"

"I shall be twenty-four next month," answered Louie, quite unmoved, in appearance at least.

"You were educated out of charity at some convent or other, were you not?"

"Not out of charity; a regular sum was paid for my maintenance and education until I was past eighteen."

"By whom?"

"I do not know, nor do I care."

"Ah! here, I suppose, is the foundation of some of those dreams in which you take so much pleasure: Deserted infant—solitary life—unexpected complication of circumstances—meeting of the repentant parent or parents with the forgiving child."

"You are mistaken. I should not forgive my desertion, nor do I base any romantic dream on the mystery of my birth. I have no doubt that it is of the vulgarest and most commonplace sort. My parents, whoever they may be, were ashamed of my birth, and did chance reveal to me their identity, I should now be ashamed of them, and stand aloof. Had I been completely

abandoned, I might then perhaps have believed in some pitiful tragedy; but since I was not so abandoned, since the love of father and mother took, in my case, the shape of so many pounds a year, discontinued when I was supposed to be of age to work for my daily bread—since not a word or sign of interest has reached me for nearly four-and-twenty years, I feel bound by no tie of duty, still less by any tie of affection.” As Louie uttered these words an expression of hard defiance came into her eyes, and showed that the depths of her nature were not all of feminine softness.

“Perhaps,” observed Lady Thurlow, whose pleasure in the dissection of this girl’s heart increased in proportion as some sensitive nerve quivered under her knife, “perhaps in the few years of servitude that elapsed before you came to me there was some food for romance?”

“None whatever. On leaving school I went as governess to a large family of small children. We lived in the country, and I rarely left the house, except for a walk in the fields with my little pupils. I was well treated, and enjoyed a certain consideration in the family; but the wearisome monotony of my life induced me at last to seek a change.”

"And for that change you came to me: you exchanged quarrelsome, pinafore-tearing, romping children for a cross-grained old woman, with an incurable complaint. Do you think you have gained any thing by the exchange?"

Louie did not answer at once, and seemed to reflect; then she said, deliberately,—

"Yes."

"How? I am curious to hear your reasons. The monotony must be about the same, for I see no one but my lawyer and my doctor—both married men with large families."

"I have gained by the exchange, because my intellectual faculties have a wider scope. I am not tied down to petty duties which absorb every moment of the day; I have some hours for reading and thought. Then you yourself are a curious psychological study, and such a study is exceedingly interesting to me."

"You are too good. I should like to hear what your study of me has brought forth; what do you think of me?"

"I think that if you had had a little heart, or rather, if you had listened sometimes to its promptings, you would have been a grand woman. You have immense originality; you have great insight into the characters of others,

especially into the darker side of those characters; you have an indomitable will; you have courage amounting almost to heroism; and you are besides, in many ways, very clever. But your great overshadowing scepticism, which makes you doubt every thing, makes you even doubt your own intellectual powers; you would as pitilessly scoff at yourself as at your neighbours. Your prejudices, especially your absurd prejudice of caste, are about the only things you respect. Yet I have sometimes seen a passing expression in your eyes which has made me fancy that the hardness, which is your boast, is not entirely genuine; that, in the dim past there lingers some remembrance of a blessed weakness, which keeps you human—but I see that you have enough of my analysis—remember, I did not volunteer it.”

Both women remained silent for some minutes watching the sun descend behind Ischia. But Lady Thurlow, never very susceptible to the beauties of nature, did not even notice the glow of red, purple, and gold which suffused sky and water; she seemed to be looking far beyond, perhaps into that dim past to which the girl had alluded. With a contraction of the brow which in another would have been a frown, but with

her was merely the effect of thought, she presently turned towards Louie, who, in the delight which the beauty of the sunset caused her, had already forgotten the past conversation, and said, abruptly,—

“Tell me, in those dreams of yours, do you dwell on such subjects as—love and marriage?”

Louie started, and involuntarily blushed.

“You need not answer, or, rather, you have already answered. What!” she added, with a sort of rage, “even you? Do you not know, child, that you are a dependent, poor, an outcast from society, on which you have not even the claim of respectable birth; a pale-faced girl, whose youth will, before many years, be completely past? Even you—even you!—Do not sit there in your white immovability! have you nothing to say in your own defence?”

“I need no defence. All you say is true: I am poor, a nobody, and plain; yet I have a treasure within me which you have overlooked: I have a nature, fresh, untried, younger, too, than that of many a girl of seventeen, with powers of constancy, of devotion, of sacrifice, of which you, in your hard wisdom, can have no

idea. Why should you say 'even you' with such bitter contempt? Am I indeed so totally different from other young women?" as she said these words Louie's eyes assumed a half-wild, half-pleading look.

"Poor girl!" Lady Thurlow murmured, with a pity in which there was a certain contempt; "so you, too, would learn the meaning of that bitter thing, love, even at the expense of torture. I see it—you can imagine no greater suffering than that of remaining much longer in the colourless sameness of your dreary life. Well, perhaps you are right." Then she added, with a sudden change of manner, "Perhaps you think that, because I allow you greater liberty than I ought to do, I have conceived a liking for you, and will leave you money enough at my death to buy a husband?"

"I do not think any thing so absurd," composedly replied Louie, who had once more assumed her reclining position on the sand.

"Indeed! Then you would think me quite justified in giving you nothing beyond your wages?"

Louie thought some moments before answering.

"No, I do not think you would be justified

in giving me nothing beyond my—wages, as you call them. My position with you has been in many respects a hard one, and I have earned a holiday; you ought to leave me enough to enable me to take that holiday.”

“To leave you enough! you talk as though my death were as near as it is certain——”

Scarcely had Lady Thurlow uttered these words than her face contracted frightfully; her hand involuntarily raised itself to her tortured breast, and she set her teeth grimly, for she knew that the pain that had seized her, with even more than usual violence, would last some time. But not a sound of complaint did this woman of iron utter. Louie was by her side in an instant, a little paler even than usual perhaps, but, also, silent and composed. It was a singular thing to see these two women so utterly silent at a moment when it would be natural to expect cries and groans on one side, and a running accompaniment of condolences on the other. Once, when Louie, having administered all the ordinary restoratives, stood watching the cold sweat of agony that beaded the white, drawn face, an involuntary, half-uttered “poor creature!” came to her lips. Lady Thurlow heard the murmur, and said, in a low, changed voice,—

"Are you really sorry for me?"

"Yes," quietly answered Louie, wondering much at this unusual display of weakness.

When the violence of the pain had subsided, Lady Thurlow lay back in her chair utterly exhausted—it was an exhaustion that looked like death. Louie turned to the women to call them; she then saw that they had retreated to a greater distance, that one was on her knees praying with many gesticulations, while all were in tears, and apparently terror-stricken. They, to whom all grief is always the excuse for violent demonstrations, for tearing of hair and loud weeping, looked upon the stoical silence of the strangers as something supernatural, or, to use a more appropriate word, as something satanic. When they were first employed to carry Lady Thurlow, they had attempted to lighten their labour by some of their usual ejaculations; but their hearty "Coraggio, Signora!" was received with such a stony Medusa-like look that they humbly sank into complete silence—a penance the extent of which only those who know these light-hearted Capri peasants will be able to appreciate. Louie, notwithstanding her own preoccupation, could not help smiling at the grotesque form which terror and pity mingled, had assumed

on this occasion, but she beckoned to them nevertheless, and the difficult ascent was commenced. The shocks which she necessarily underwent caused Lady Thurlow to bite her white lips, but she did not utter a sound ; when, however, they came to the more level path—it was not more than a path at the widest—a sigh of relief escaped her, and before they reached the inn where she occupied a suite of rooms, she had sunk into a lethargy which, if not sleep, had at least that blessed property of sleep, unconsciousness.

CHAPTER II.

A RETROSPECT.

LADY THURLOW was universally regarded with awe, not only by the peasants, who called her “*La donna di marmo*,” but, to a lesser extent, by the people of the inn where she had deigned to take up her abode. She occupied the most considerable apartment of the house, and here she reigned with despotic rule; her maid and courier waited on her with as much ceremony as though the quaint, old-fashioned, arch-roofed rooms had been in Belgravia, instead of in the rock-island of Capri. As to the other inmates of the house, she ignored them as completely as though they had belonged to some inferior order of creatures, and in this regard showed, on one occasion, an amount of insolent ill-breeding which none but those who believe themselves born to rule would dare to exhibit. Two English ladies, in the goodness of their

hearts, and also, perhaps, in the excess of their curiosity, called on the invalid, pretexting that they thought she must be lonely. Lady Thurlow was denied to them on the plea of fatigue, and so the ladies left their cards; these were, within the hour, returned to them with this message: "Lady Thurlow presents her compliments to Mrs. Cardwell and Miss Boyce, whom she has not the honour of knowing; she begs to add that she has no desire to extend the list of her acquaintances." The indignation of the ladies and of their friends can better be imagined than described. Two individuals only were admitted to the stern invalid's apartment; these were two gentlemen, one of whom, a dapper little Englishman, lived in the house, and was, notwithstanding the secrecy with which he surrounded his profession, universally believed to be Lady Thurlow's physician; the other, who from time to time came over from Naples, was, with equal truth, set down as her lawyer. So, in consequence of the sort of court which she maintained, it came to pass that Lady Thurlow was looked upon as a person of vast importance, and an exaggerated idea of her wealth spread about the country. She formed the most frequent theme of conjecture and gossip, not only

to the boarders of the hotel, but also to the poorest fishermen of the "Marina." As can readily be imagined, her name was an unpronounceable one to Italian lips, and she was called simply "Miladi," when not spoken of by the descriptive name which the peasants, in their characteristic and picturesque language, had given her. Even the English caught up the habit, and her name was rarely pronounced.

When Louie Farland had resigned her charge into the maid's hands, she turned from the rooms, which seemed to her close and sultry, and, going up a flight or two of stairs, found herself on the roof, which was flat; most of the houses in Capri have roofs either flat, or with wave-like surfaces; some indeed, of the oldest, retain much of the Saracenic style of architecture—one of the many imprints left on this island by its old-time conquerors—this adds greatly to the oriental look of the place, which so delights artists and antiquarians. But Louie, as she looked down upon the quiet village, already subsiding into night stillness, was not pondering on these things; she was, indeed, scarcely pondering on any thing; feelings were swaying her, rather than thoughts. It was a delicious, starry May evening; there was

scarcely a breeze to disturb the soft tranquillity about her, yet the girl shivered slightly, as with cold. And indeed she was cold, her whole nature suffered from that chilliness whose other name is loneliness. Unconsciously she approached an oval grated window, and looked through it. This grated window had, in the time of Queen Joanna of Naples, thrown light down upon nuns worshipping in their convent chapel—how would those same nuns turn with horror in their shrouds, if they could but know that their monastery had become an hotel much frequented by heretical English, and their beautifully proportioned chapel, the dining-hall of the same! Yes, as Louie looked down from this window, which was near the high vaulted ceiling, she saw, seated at a long table, about a dozen people busy at their evening meal, and amid the clatter of knives, forks, and tea-spoons, frequent peals of laughter reached her ears. Very likely the jokes were neither very new nor very witty, but they were evidently enjoyed, and this homely scene spoke to her of what at times she craved, with a passionate craving—companionship. These people would have been astonished if they had known how frequently, on moonless nights like this, when her shadow

could not be distinguished from the outer darkness, this pale-faced girl watched them and listened to their voices.

A loud peal of laughter startled her; she left her post of observation, and hastened up some unsafe-looking steps to a higher part of the roof, and here no sound reached her save the distant, scarcely audible splash of the waves against the rocky shore, and an occasional song, melodious only on account of the softening effect of distance. Leaning against the parapet, her head supported in her hands, Louie began to think. Her reflections were not very gay, for they dwelt on her past. From what Lady Thurlow had that afternoon said, it has already been seen that this girl's life, thus far, had been singularly sad and colourless. When she had been in her employment some months, Lady Thurlow had one day said, abruptly, as though the idea had just struck her,—

“You never cared for any body in your life, did you?”

Louie had been startled by the suddenness of the question, still she had answered, almost immediately,—

“Yes, one person I did love with my whole heart and soul.”

"And who was that, pray?"

"One who was every thing to me; a woman, a nun. When I was taken, a mere infant, to the convent, and through the influence of the bishop received, a note accompanied the first instalment of money; that note briefly stated that I had not been baptized and had received no name. One of the younger nuns was struck with indignation at its cold tone, and, taking me in her arms, exclaimed, "She shall be my child, poor disowned waif! give her the name of my mother, let her be called Louie Farland, and that will be an undying claim to my love."

"I wonder she did not tire of you; you are not a romantic-looking protégée." Lady Thurlow was not often complimentary, this, however, troubled Louie but little.

"She did not though; she guided me with a firm hand, never hiding from me the trials and dangers of my position, but inspiring me with courage to face these by showing me the hand of God in human events. Oh, if she had lived, I should never rebel against fate! but she died before I was sixteen, and the others did not care for me." There was such a sad tone in Louie's voice, as she uttered those last words,

that even Lady Thurlow's caustic tongue was still ; she saw, as by the light of a vivid flash, the loneliness of the school-girl who had lost the one creature she loved, and who was by no means formed to be a general favourite. Thinking over these things, it was no wonder that Louie, when she at last left the roof, felt dull and spiritless.

All that night, and all the next day, Lady Thurlow lay very ill. It was an unquiet, dreary time to Louie Farland ; her regular occupations were broken in upon, and her presence was rarely required in the sick-room, where the doctor and the lawyer seemed about equally in demand. It was a boast of Lady Thurlow's, that no amount of physical suffering obscured her mental faculties. On two occasions already, when enduring agonies, she had dictated important changes in her will. Perhaps even now she was, with a word or nod of assent, changing the fortunes of more than one relative. So thought Louie, as she sat by herself during the long afternoon. She believed that there were relatives, though, during the eighteen months that she had been in Lady Thurlow's employment, she had never seen any, nor had she been in any way enlightened

as to the family history by either of the confidential servants, Dennis and Martha. These two had been so long in the stern lady's service that they had caught something of her grim taciturnity. To tell the truth, Louie was somewhat afraid of these stolid servants, of Martha especially. This woman, who might be forty-five years of age, and who had eyes of a dull greyish-green hue, entirely devoid of light or expression, used occasionally to look at the companion with a fixed glance which made the poor girl shudder. She often fancied that Martha resented her youth and was trying, by her ill-favoured glance, to drain all freshness from her nature. The peasants were more simple in their expression of distrust; they invariably crossed themselves at her approach, and whispered that she had the evil eye. Perhaps, after all, Lady Thurlow would leave all her fortune to some institution of far-off charity, for the pleasure of tormenting some expectant heir. Leave it soon she must; for all, even to the guarded expression of Dr. Seward's face, told that the end was near,—the end of this strange woman's life, the end, too, of her own servitude. What should she do when she was turned once more adrift upon the

world? A great feeling of disquiet entered into this lonely girl's mind. She was sick of her sunless life, and felt tempted to rebel. As she sat there, during that long dull afternoon, her idle hands trifling with some unregarded work, thoughts of merry school companions came vividly upon her—companions who had scarcely been friends; for what had they ever had in common, except, indeed, study and the drudgery of school life? They had nearly all passed quite out of her knowledge. Once, in London, more than a year before, she had met one, the prettiest, sweetest tempered of them all, a girl named Amy Foyle. It was a rainy day, and Louie was passing, intent on some errand, wrapped in her waterproof cloak and grasping an umbrella, when, stepping from a jeweller's shop and turning towards a waiting carriage, she saw Amy, her bright face made brighter by the smile with which she listened to the words of a young man by her side. Louie would have shrunk back, but it was too late; her old school-mate exclaimed, "That is certainly Louie Farland!" and Louie was forced to approach the carriage, where the young lady was already seated. She tried to return heartily the greeting which an overflow of

happiness rather than any feeling of affection rendered cordial, but she could not; she felt nothing but a dull depression of spirits, which, in spite of herself, was reflected in her face. Miss Foyle, however, was too engrossed in the delightful selfishness of love to notice this. She sent her companion away on some slight pretext, in order to have an opportunity of saying, eagerly,—

“What do you think of him, Louie? Is he not handsome? is he not manly-looking? Oh, I am the happiest of girls! and, dear, it is to be next June, and you must come; you must promise at once.”

And then, without waiting for an answer, she launched forth on a dissertation of her lover's perfections, a description of her wedding-dress, already ordered, and speculations as to the probable number of the presents she would receive. All this was interspersed with a thousand little laughs, blushes, occasional terms of endearment towards her old class-mate, and, finally, a peremptory invitation to come and see her; then this embodiment of health, youth, and joy drove off in her carriage, leaving Louie with her waterproof and umbrella. During the whole time Amy had not made one inquiry as

to her poor school-friend's present mode of life or future prospects. Louie's heart grew hard and dry as she remembered this; yet bright-faced Amy Foyle was really kind and affectionate, only she was a little thoughtless, and steeped in that greatest of all egotisms, a first love. It is unnecessary to add that no visit, either before or after the wedding, was ever paid. Louie often pondered on this little incident, and drew her own conclusions from it. On her side, Amy, on a certain morning, thought of it too, and said to her young husband,—

“Do you remember, dear, that pale-faced girl we saw one rainy day, when——”

“When we paid that auspicious visit to the jeweller's? Certainly I remember your friend; for was she not the cause that I was cruelly sent away, in order that you might chatter nonsense together? About all that was visible of her was a white cheek; all the rest was waterproof—I hate waterproofs—and a dripping umbrella. Yet I remember that a parting glance gave me the impression of a face rather fine as to form.”

“Oh, no, love! you are mistaken; she is quite plain. Well,—will you believe it?—I invited

her, oh, so warmly! to come and see me—for I was so happy that I was good to every body—and, think of it! she never came near me.”

“Singular want of taste, that! But why did you not go to her then?”

“Well, I must confess that I forgot to ask her where she lived.”

“Oh!——” and the young husband, who was a clever fellow, and fond of observing human nature in its many varieties, fell into a brown study, from which he was roused by a—but really, this is what is called telling tales out of school.

The weary hours of the long afternoon passed away at last. Gradually darkness stole into the little sitting-room, and still there was no change in the sinister silence which reigned around. This silence began to tell on Louie's spirits, and, though by no means given to foolish terrors, she heartily wished for some sort of companionship, which should take her by force from her own gloomy reflections. She was at last startled by a voice close to her, saying,—

“Please, Miss Farland——”

“Oh, Martha, how you frightened me!” and she pressed her hands to her fast-beating heart. Martha wore list shoes, and had come up with

the tread of a cat; besides, her voice was one which grated singularly on the nerves.

"Please, Miss Farland," repeated the impassible Martha, without deigning to notice the companion's silly weakness—it was a part of her system to treat the girl with severe and depressing politeness—"my lady has given orders that you should watch with her to-night, seeing that I had a bad turn myself to-day." This was unwelcome and unexpected news, for it had never been a part of Louie's duties to watch by the sick-bed, and she felt real terror at the thought of being alone during the solemn hours of night with this stern, dying woman; but she was too wise to let this natural fear be perceived, and said quietly,—

"Very well; I shall go at once. How is she?"

"Much easier as to pain, but low—very low."

"Is—is there immediate danger?"

"No; leastways the doctor thinks not; he is to sleep in the little room off my lady's, and you are to call him in case of any change, but he expects that she will sleep the night through. Is there any thing I can do for you, Miss?" This was said in a tone that meant, "You know I do not feel bound to do any thing for you at

all; I simply offer my services out of polite condescension;" so Louie meekly answered, "Nothing, thank you." Hearing this, the woman glided away as noiselessly as she had come, and Louie was left alone to face her night's task.

CHAPTER III.

DARKNESS.

AS Louie entered the sick-room the doctor was leaving it on tip-toe; he merely laid his finger on his lips, and enjoined on her by signs the most complete silence and quiet; then, closing the door of communication, he proceeded with an easy conscience to take some sleep, of which he was much in need—at least Louie guessed that he did so, for soon even the slightest sound was hushed.

For some time the young watcher was almost afraid to move in her chair, but before long the cramped position became unbearable, and, taking courage, she changed it for an easier one, and took a survey of the room. There was no light except that of a night-lamp placed so that even its faint glimmer should not disturb the invalid; consequently, the corners of the apartment were

quite dark. Like nearly all the rooms in that old house, the ceiling was arched; it was large, and contained some ancient strangely-shaped furniture which gave a certain mediæval look to the place. The bed, however, was modern, with light curtains shadowing it. For this Louie was duly grateful, for it seemed to her that a sombre funereal bed, such as invariably figures in ghost stories, would have been too much for her nerves. She had never considered herself imaginative or given to vague fears; indeed, such weaknesses had often been ridiculed by her. That evening, however, she began to realize that nervous fears were perhaps not quite such chimerical things as she had once supposed.

It was some time before she could force herself to look steadily at the dying woman, and when finally she did so, she was shocked indeed to see what a dreadful change suffering had already wrought there. Lady Thurlow lay perfectly motionless, with her eyes closed, and one hand thrown outside the covering; it seemed as though she scarcely breathed, and Louie thought shudderingly of those effigies seen on old tombs in ancient cathedrals. There was certainly nothing like affection between these two, yet as

she sat looking at her patroness, a great pity, not unmingled with a certain admiration, rose in the girl's heart for this brave, stern woman.

The first hours of the night passed quietly away; Louie was growing somewhat accustomed to her position, though her nerves, excited as they were, forbade any thing like sleep, or even drowsiness. During that time her active mind was trying, from the scanty details which she knew of this woman's past life, to shape some history, some tragedy even, which might serve as a key to her exceptional character; the only accompaniment to these thoughts was the striking of the village clock hard by. This clock struck as no clock in a civilized land would dare to strike. The hours were counted in an ingeniously bewildering way, commencing at sunset, going on as far as the sixth stroke, and then beginning again. As the hour of sunset varied, of course, according to the season, a great confusion in the listener's mind was the inevitable consequence; moreover, each quarter was tolled by the cracked church bell, whose brazen voice was loud and grating. The effect during a sleepless night can easily be imagined. At each stroke Louie started, and, in spite of her strong common sense, as the un-

canny echoes died away, she would furtively glance around the darkened room. After some hours passed in this way the intense silence around became almost unbearable; she longed to rise, to go to the open window and see if there was not some other creature in the neighbourhood who, like herself, was sleepless; a wandering cat stealing along the low roofs would have been a great comfort to her. She was in the act of leaving her chair, when she sank back again, cold with indescribable fear, for she found that Lady Thurlow's eyes were fixed on her with an expression which she had never seen there before. This she saw distinctly, for she had become quite accustomed to the partial darkness of the room. Remembering the injunctions given her, Louie, by a strong effort of her will, shook off the impression of terror which had taken possession of her, and rose, intending to call the doctor. But Lady Thurlow, seeing the movement, beckoned her by an almost imperceptible wave of the hand to the bedside.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, in a hollow, changed voice.

"Call the doctor; he said that——"

"Never mind what he said," interrupted

Lady Thurlow, with much of her old irritability; "you are to obey me, not him. Sit down there," she added, glancing at a chair by the bed. Then she seemed about to relapse into insensibility. A wild fear lest that insensibility should be death seized upon Louie, and, feeling impelled to say something, she asked,—

"Did you sleep well?"

"Sleep?" repeated Lady Thurlow, slowly, and with an accent which chilled her listener. "Was it sleep? I think not; yet it might have been. I saw them both; both, I tell you; and I myself was with them—that is, myself as I was then, forty years ago. Forty years! it is a long time to have passed away, relentlessly passed away! and now the end has come, and this, I suppose, is death. No, it was not sleep; for sleep does not bring such pain, nor raise such dreadful questionings. Louie, come nearer, close to me. I must not be alone again with them; I cannot bear it. My strength has gone from me, and I—I am afraid. There, give me your hand, that I may feel something warm and living."

To describe Louie's sensations at that moment would be impossible; she was literally faint with fear. It was as though she stood

face to face with the ghosts of this woman's dread life; then, when she felt the contact of her hand, which already had the clammy coldness of death, she longed to scream aloud. She managed with difficulty to say,—

“Let me call some one.”

“No, no, no!” reiterated Lady Thurlow; “none but you shall see me thus. Do you know, Louie, that, if you had been in my place, you would have done as I did? When I was young I was curiously like you in character. That is why I have kept you by me so long; that is why you must stay by me now, holding my hand, listening to me; for I must talk as long as I have strength—talk for fear I should sleep again; if, indeed, it was sleep.”

In the midst of her terror Louie felt a strong return of the curiosity which had often assailed her as to her patroness. A dreadful sort of fascination forced her to keep her eyes on the poor white face, and to say, in a low voice,—

“What were they like, those two?”

Lady Thurlow shook off, with an impatient effort, the torpor that, at each pause, took possession of her senses. It was wonderful how, even in this hour, she conquered weakness

with the force of her will. She said, brokenly, and with evident effort,—

“What were they like? do you not know? She was my sister, and she is dead. She died almost in want, while I was rich; yet no one can accuse me of injustice. My money did not come from our father, who was a reckless spendthrift, and left us two, motherless beings that we were, entirely to ourselves. A distant relative, who was also my godmother, left me her fortune. So, you see, it was all mine, and my sister had no right to it. She was a little younger than I; she was also weaker and prettier. Usually, she obeyed me passively. Then he came. There! I see him once more. Look! look at him, with his fair hair tossed back from the forehead; see the bright, laughing eyes! Ah! now he is vanishing, for I am not alone. Oh, that time! that dreadful time! My father liked him, and gave him the privileges of a friend, though he was far beneath us in social position; he was nothing but a poor painter. One day he and my sister eloped and married. I never forgave it; I do not forgive it now.”

“Lady Thurlow, do not say that! In such a moment as this you must forgive, you must!”

exclaimed Louie, her indignation conquering her fear.

Lady Thurlow fixed her half-glazed eyes on the girl, and answered, without any show of anger,—

“How could I? I loved him too, and he never guessed it. Since that day my one idea in life grew to be revenge, first against him and his wife, then against his class in life; my one passion became pride of race. I married too, and took a high rank in society. Once—it seems yesterday—I, in my carriage, passed a woman leading two sickly children. It was my sister, and I saw that she was poor, miserably poor. I leaned back among my cushions and laughed. They had many children, but they were sickly, and died one by one, all but the youngest, who, when I am dead, will be rich. Is it not strange? I have made many wills, but I always end by destroying those which are not in favour of my sister's child. They died years ago, she and her husband, and almost every night since I have seen them. In those dreadful hours I have sometimes repented of my just hardness, but that is of no use now. Child, I am very ill, very ill!”

Louie, despite her self-command, was sobbing

convulsively. There was something very dreadful in the broken words of the dying woman, uttered as they were during that most mysterious hour between night and morning, when a shiver seems to run through all nature. Louie once more made an effort to call the doctor, and once more Lady Thurlow prevented her.

“No,” she muttered; “you only must see me in my weakness. Talk to me; do not let me think.”

Louie, by a natural impulse, threw herself on her knees, and said,—

“Let me pray for you!”

“Folly! Can your prayers avail me, who believe in nothing? Is your God not a just God? But you are right after all. Pray for me; I should like to deceive myself into thinking that those murmured words of yours were heard. Let me remember—I too, as a child, used to say ‘Our Father.’ It must be consoling to fancy that we are all children under an invisible Father. Louie, do you believe? do you really believe?”

“Indeed, indeed I do!”

Something like a moan escaped the stern woman—a moan so full of despair that it wrung

the listener's heart. She had been so accustomed to look upon Lady Thurlow as a being completely encased in hard and cynical unbelief, that this death-bed revelation was terrible to witness. The familiar words escaped the girl's lips, but her eyes never ceased to look at the drawn white face so near her own.

"Louie," said Lady Thurlow, after a pause—and her voice was fainter than ever—"I have been called a hard woman, but I have been just also. I have given large sums to charities that deserved help; I have not been more indulgent to myself than to others. Since my sister's death I have shut myself out from all pleasure; my life from that day has been a life of suffering, and I have not complained. Does that count for nothing?"

"Forgiveness should have preceded expiation," said Louie, feeling compelled to say this, yet scarcely knowing how she had strength to do so. "Forgive them now."

"How can one forgive the dead? what good would any forgiveness do them? Oh, Louie, how clearly I heard her voice during that dreadful sleep! Its sound took from me my strength, my pride, and left me what I am now. I am bitterly afraid; for since the dead can speak to

the dying, there is, there must be, an after-life—an after-life which is about to commence for me. Why is it that thoughts which, in the days of my strength, I could banish at will, should now tyrannize over me so cruelly? Is it because the spirit already feels and rejoices in its separation from the body?"

"Let me call the doctor!" once more pleaded Louie, feeling her strength giving way under the horror of this dreadful scene. But the icy hand, with a great effort, closed more tightly about hers, and she was conquered.

There came now a great stillness in the room, broken only by the dying woman's laboured breathing and Louie's suppressed sobs. Meanwhile the night had passed away; a cold, grey light began to steal over the sky, and a chilly wind came in murmuring through the half-open window. Presently Lady Thurlow, in scarcely audible tones, bade her companion open the window quite, so that, from where she lay, she could look out upon the country. Louie obeyed mechanically. It was an immense relief no longer to feel the clammy fingers on her hand. Then she returned to the bedside, and both watched the morning slowly coming into life.

Just before the sun rose Lady Thurlow, by a sudden exercise of strength, which seemed to Louie little short of miraculous, lifted her head, gazed earnestly on the beautiful, distant sea framed in high rocks, as though it were an image which she wished to imprint on her mind for all eternity. A few minutes after, she said, far more distinctly than she had yet spoken,—

“If He was indeed Creator of this beautiful earth, your God must be a great God.”

Then she fell back heavily on the pillow—and Louie was alone with death.

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT TO HERSELF.

HOW that long day passed Louie could afterwards scarcely remember. She believed that she must have gone to the doctor's room, called him, and explained the circumstances of Lady Thurlow's death; she remembered vaguely that she felt frozen up, and that she spoke quietly and as in a dream. Through the indistinctness of her sensations she, however, remembered with a sort of pain the thoroughly business-like way in which the event was regarded. The doctor, the lawyer, and the two servants stood around the bed composedly talking in low tones about the deceased, and arranging as to the best means of conveying her, according to directions given by herself in stoical anticipation of her death, to England. Louie grew sick and faint, for the impression

which the death-scene had made on her was terribly vivid, and the contrast between it and this heartless talk was exquisitely painful. She managed to reach her own room unnoticed, and, throwing herself on the bed, sank into a state of half-unconsciousness which lasted many hours. Fantastic visions or dreams tormented her, and in after-days mingled weirdly with her remembrance of actual events. Whether she lay there that whole day entirely forgotten, or whether, taking this torpor for sleep, those about her had feared to break it, she never knew, nor indeed did she care.

The next morning, when Louie was dressed and had taken her breakfast, she was at last able to shake off to some extent the impression of that dreadful night; she sat down by her window, from which she caught a delightful glimpse of the sea, and began resolutely to think over her position and lay some plans for the future. Her salary had been a liberal one, and consequently she found herself mistress of a sum, small indeed, but which seemed to her a little fortune. Soon, however, notwithstanding all her efforts, her mind strayed from the consideration of pounds, shillings, and pence, which bitter experience had taught her to regard with

any thing but a romantic young-ladyish contempt, to other themes. In spite of the impression of terror still strong upon her, in spite of the sincere pity with which she thought of the late sufferer, in spite of the depressing influence of death and the dreary details of coffins and other funereal arrangements, which had reached her even in her seclusion—in spite of all this, and of her own friendless condition, Louie felt her spirits rise. A sense of liberty, of freedom from petty restraints and tedious duties, a knowledge that her out-goings and in-comings were subject to no authority, brought to her a feeling little short of exultation. She was indeed free, she was young, she had just emerged from a life of restraint and depression; and as she sat by her window the sunshine of this southern spring morning caressed her, and seemed to give her new life. She loved this sunshine; she gloried to feel it about her; she even, in a moment of almost child-like delight, looked up toward the sky and smiled, giving back sunshine for sunshine. “And they say that I am cold!” she murmured, still smiling.

She was startled from her pleasant thoughts by a discreet knock at the door, and she had just time to feel ashamed of her unreasonable,

unreasoning happiness, and to compose her face to the requirements of the occasion, before saying "Come in." The door opened, and the doctor made his appearance.

"Good morning, Miss Farland. I am glad to see you looking so much better; I feared that I should have to see you professionally. 'Pon my word, you looked like a ghost when you—but, I beg pardon, I see that I distress you. It really was a trying occasion for a young person unaccustomed to such scenes. We doctors, even the best of us, get hardened—unavoidably so. I cannot help regretting that you did not persevere in your intention of calling me when you perceived the change. Of course, to a professional man it is always an interesting study, especially in a disease like Lady Thurlow's——"

"Please do not, Doctor!" exclaimed poor Louie, turning pale.

"Oh! of course not—I see: impression still strong—nerves agitated—bad dreams, I dare say—eh? I shall send you a soothing potion for to-night; you'll be all right to-morrow. You must try and put a little more colour in those cheeks, my dear young lady, now that Lady—now that your duties are at an end, I mean. Take care of your health, take care of your

health; that is what I keep repeating to my own daughters. I have six of them—six fine girls! ‘Take care of your health, Sallie,’ I said to the eldest when I left England this last time; for health means good looks, and good looks represent—how shall I express it?—a fair chance of success in—in the world of marrying and giving in marriage, not to put too fine a point on it! Ha! ha! There, you look less white and frightened already; that is right. I dare say it will take some days to recover from this state of nervous excitability. Curious fact that a person of your temperament, composed, quiet—shall I even say cold?—should be so nervously susceptible to impressions; very curious fact indeed! Do you remember how poor Lady Thurlow scoffed at the idea of nerves? Strange theories she had on that subject. You know, that woman had a perfectly marvellous constitution—she had indeed! Any one else would have succumbed years ago, but she seemed to defy her fate to the very last—a wonderful woman! You were not with her, I think, when she underwent the operation? No, no, of course not; you were probably in your school pinafores at that time. I remember now; it was rather a flabby young woman, with a flat

nose; Lady Thurlow sent her away because she cried when she saw the instruments. Any other woman would have died under that operation, but she did not; on the contrary, she became so much better that we had for a moment some hopes of her recovery, but the—the evil was too deep.”

There was no knowing how long Dr. Seward would have continued in that strain, for he was naturally a garrulous man, which did not prevent him from being a very clever physician; he had been so repressed by Lady Thurlow's imperious nature that he rebounded from it now like an india-rubber ball from the pressure of a strong hand. Louie determined to change the subject at all hazards, and said,—

“When—when will all the arrangements be completed?”

“Before long. Having to send to Naples for the—ahem!—coffin has taken time, but it arrived an hour ago. It seems there was some trouble with the boatmen—superstitious set that they are!—and I rather expect further trouble in getting to Naples. But if we gild the pill sufficiently it will go down without too much difficulty; the gilding will have to come out of the pockets of the heirs, whoever they

may be, so we can afford to be generous!" at which the jovial doctor chuckled; then, remembering the gravity of the circumstances, he checked himself abruptly and assumed a solemn expression of countenance which was infinitely more ludicrous than a broad laugh. "But this brings me to the object of my visit; Mr. Blair is about to read the will, according to Lady Thurlow's wishes, and begs that you will be present."

"Is my presence absolutely necessary?"

"Necessary?—well, I suppose not precisely. The two servants and I will assist at the reading——"

"That will be quite sufficient," said Louie, hastily; "I decline to be present."

"But, Miss Farland, consider the circumstances!"

"I have considered them. Having no claim on Lady Thurlow's heirs, except for an inconsiderable arrear in my salary, I do not think myself by any means bound to hear a reading which would not have the slightest interest to me. I am a perfect stranger to all the deceased lady's relatives, and am quite indifferent as to their possible expectations, and probable disappointments. I shall, if you will kindly allow

it, remain quietly in my room until the reading is over."

Then Louie rose in a manner which clearly indicated that she wished to put an end to the discussion and to the visit at the same time. The doctor had no alternative but to rise from his armchair also, but as he did so, he murmured,

"Position of confidence—respect for the dead——"

Louie's eyes grew dark and threateningly bright as she answered,—

"I consider myself less wanting in respect to the memory of Lady Thurlow by remaining in quiet seclusion than by indulging in vulgar curiosity about this will, or gossiping with the first listener I could find, about the dead woman's peculiarities, faults, and past sufferings;" and then she bowed the loquacious gentleman out with a cold dignity which, as he afterwards asserted, "would better have suited a duchess dismissing a troublesome inferior, than a little nobody of a companion taking leave of a person of importance who condescended to interest himself in her—the cold, proud, self-sufficient woman!"

Having gained her point, Louie sat down

once more near the window. There was a little mirror just in front of her, and, as she looked up, she caught a glimpse of herself. She then began deliberately to criticize her own face: the encounter with the doctor had left a slight flush on her cheeks, and that flush was peculiarly becoming; at the end of this examination Louie's verdict was: "If I had a little colour I should not be bad-looking," from which we must conclude that this cold, proud, self-sufficient woman was not quite free from the weaknesses of her sex and age. To tell the truth, this girl, brought up as she had been in uniform dullness of life, far from all which could heighten or excite the imagination, had still a love for the beautiful which amounted almost to a passion. The beauties of nature, the play of light and shade over a green meadow, or, better still, over the wonderful variety of rock, water, and hill such as Capri presents, a beautiful picture, and, to a greater extent still, the charm of a harmonious face, the play of expression in human eyes—all these things filled her with a delight which she had never thought to analyze or question, and to the charm of which she would at times yield herself with complete rapture. There were moments when the want of positive

beauty in herself gave her pain, and this was less from vanity—a sentiment which, it is needless to say, had been repressed in her from her earliest childhood—than from a certain craving for beauty in the abstract.

Evidently this was a day for musing. Once or twice Louie tried to shake off her inertion, and took up a book, then a piece of work: but it was useless; she turned but one page of the book, and merely threaded her needle, when the fit of musing returned. Smiling, she at last gave up the combat; no duties called her imperiously away, she was her own mistress, and so, why should she not sit with her hands idly folded and her eyes dreamily fixed upon the blue waveless sea, if such was her good pleasure?

About an hour passed in this way, when once more she heard a discreet knock at her door. This time it was not the doctor, but the lawyer Mr. Blair; who entered; warned perhaps by the misadventure of his friend, this gentleman announced the object of his visit in strictly business-like terms; bowing slightly, he took the chair which Louie offered him and began at once:—

“I have come to announce a piece of news

to you, Miss Farland, which I think will give you pleasure."

"Indeed?" questioned Louie, much astonished.

"Lady Thurlow, in a codicil to her will, drawn up by myself the day before her death, has left you a legacy of seven hundred and fifty pounds."

"To me?" exclaimed Louie, flushing with excitement; and then she added, thoughtlessly, "are you sure there is no mistake?"

"It is scarcely likely that I should make a mistake in so simple a professional detail as that."

"I beg your pardon," and Louie bowed her head, crushed by the lawyer's virtuous indignation.

"The terms of the paragraph may seem clearer to you than they seem to us; they run thus, almost word for word: 'I leave to my companion Louisa Farland, not from any impulse of generosity, but from a sense of justice, the sum of £750, which will enable her to take that holiday which she claims as her right. At the same time, I wish to testify, also from a sense of justice, that Louisa Farland has earned my respect by her great independence of mind,

by her bluntly expressed and original thoughts, and by her clear understanding of my character. If, during the eighteen months of her sojourn with me, she had attempted ordinary flattery or subserviency, it is needless to say that she should not have had one penny beyond her just wages.'” He paused, hoping perhaps to obtain some explanation, but Louie was so bewildered by the sudden possession of a sum which, to her, seemed a mine of inexhaustible wealth, that she did not notice the significant pause. Mr. Blair was about to take his leave, when Louie, who, notwithstanding her habitual self-control, was not quite so free from curiosity as these gentlemen thought her, said, hastily,—

“May I ask—would there be any indiscretion in asking who inherits?”

“None whatever,” interrupted the lawyer, still business-like, but with a twinkle of humour in his eyes, for the discovery of a weakness in this cold young person amused him greatly. “The bulk of Lady Thurlow’s personal fortune, which represents something like twelve thousand pounds a year, is left to a nephew, of whose whereabouts I am, at this moment, in ignorance. There are certain conditions attached to the succession—conditions, however, which

the gentleman will, I fancy, find no difficulty in observing. Then there are small annuities to Martha and Dennis, your legacy, and a few trifling ones to servants in England; beside—ahem!—an insignificant sum to Dr. Seward and myself for the purchase of mourning rings. A very simple will, you see. Can I do any thing for you professionally? Your money is to be placed with the English banker at Naples, subject to your order; would you like any small advance? No? very well. A few pounds are still owing to you; I think you will find this account right,” and he deposited a small, neat packet on the table. “Good morning, Miss Farland, pray accept my congratulations,” and Mr. Blair bowed himself out. Louie wanted sadly to ask a few questions, but she did not dare to do so, for she recognized in the lawyer’s curt manner a reproach for her unfavourable reception of his friend’s gossip—as Lady Thurlow would have said in such a case, “her sense of justice kept her silent.”

It was singular that Louie’s first thought on finding herself alone was not of her own good fortune, not of the peculiar wording of that codicil which made such a material change in her position, not even as to the use she

should make of her money; that first thought, on the contrary, ran somewhat thus: "So this last remaining child of the sister's ill-fated marriage is a young man—what was it gave me the impression that it was a girl?"

The next morning there was much solemn bustle in the hotel. It was with a singular mixture of feelings that Louie listened to the distant noise of the gloomy preparations; perhaps the strongest of these feelings was one of indignation at the unusual buoyancy of her own spirits. At last, restless and uneasy, she ventured into the sitting-room, which was darkened and quiet; almost at the same moment Martha, in a gloomy dress of intense blackness, brought with her from England with a nice calculation as to the time of the year when it would probably be needed, entered it also. Seeing Louie, she came up with that stealthy tread learnt in the sick-room, and which out of it produced a disagreeable impression on the nerves.

"I understand from the servants of the house, Miss," began the woman, in appropriately sepulchral tones, "that you do not intend going back with us to England."

"I certainly do not intend to go with you," answered Louie, inwardly shuddering at the

thought of such a journey in such company. She noticed that though Martha was still severe and depressing in her manner, there was a little less superciliousness in it, and that she lingered, as if inclined for conversation. "What would it have been," thought Louie, "had the legacy been ten times as large?" Still, notwithstanding this natural thought, she assumed a benignant expression as she looked up at the bombazine sombreness at her side, for she sadly wanted Martha to talk; in consequence of her strict seclusion she was ignorant of many things which she wished to know.

"You are young, Miss," continued the woman, after a lugubrious pause, and speaking as though youth were a crime for which dire atonement would be required; "you are young, Miss."

"Not so young as I have been, Martha," observed Louie, smiling in spite of herself.

"That is true; but what I meant to express—not being a lady I may not have the power of putting it in proper words—but what I meant to express was, that you are too young to be left alone with property"—she meant *propriety*, and was not at that moment alluding to the £750; she repeated emphatically—"with

property in a land quite wild in its nature and invaded by men with beards and paint-boxes."

"Thank you, Martha, for your kind consideration, but I have no doubt that I shall be able to defend myself against the beards and paint-boxes. I quite agree with you as to the difficulties of my position, but these difficulties would be the same, if not greater, any where else, for I am determined to give myself the holiday which Lady Thurlow herself thought I deserved; and, what is more, I mean to take that holiday after my own fashion."

"Certainly, Miss, young people must have some relaxation, but Dennis and me were saying last evening that your holiday ought to be spent where you could be looked after a little——"

"You are too good, but I feel myself quite able to live without any such 'looking after.'"

"And," resumed Martha, not deigning to notice the interruption, "as we, that is Dennis and me, have made up our minds to put our savings and annuities—small as they are—together, and to put ourselves together too, that is, in short, to marry; and as we have had our eye for many a long month on a nice house at Brighton—airy rooms, delightful situation, convenient to the sea, cooking included, and

prices moderate, the very house single ladies would choose to have apartments in—and that, in fact——” here Martha, whose ideas had become somewhat entangled between matrimony, annuities, the ideal house at Brighton, and the prospect of single ladies as lodgers, found her eloquence come to an abrupt stop.

“I understand,” said Louie, with praiseworthy command of her risible faculties; “you would, out of compassion for my lonely position, wish me to be the first of that fortunate series of single ladies who are to enjoy the delights of the Brighton house. You must thank Dennis for me——”

“Ah! you will come,” and Martha seemed already transformed from the lady’s maid into the very personification of the popular idea of a lodging-house keeper at a watering-place, eager, hungry, sharp-witted, and implacable.

“No, I cannot accept your kind proposition, for which, however, I thank you.”

“Miss,” observed the irate Martha, drawing herself up with indignant sternness, “I am—I mean, I have been a servant, I know, and there is no need to remind me of it; but I am older than you, and have had experience, which gives me the right to warn you that your foolish

and headlong career can bring you no good; you will not only spend your money recklessly——”

“Excuse me, I mean to be far more economical here than I could be at Brighton.”

“—your money recklessly,” pursued Martha, undaunted, “but you will ruin your prospects for life. You cannot live on the interest of £750, enormous though the sum is—I, for my part, cannot think what my lady was thinking about when she made that codicil—and who, do you think, will employ a young woman who has spent some months living quite unprotected in a place like this, surrounded by artists and other—other vagabonds?” with which expression of virtuous indignation she left the room less softly than usual.

“Oh,” thought Louie, wearily, “how I wish they were all gone!”

Yet, notwithstanding this wish, when, in the afternoon, she took formal leave of all these people whom she had been accustomed to see daily for months past, and who now addressed her with the severe reserve of disapprobation, her heart felt heavy within her. She was indeed very much alone, and entirely uncared for, at an age when most young women are protected by the sweet ties of home. But her

courage rose again almost immediately, and her first thought was to get away from the noisy inn and find some quiet place, under the beautiful blue sky, where she might think seriously of the future and lay her plans. She quickly passed through the *piazza* which was the principal place of assembly of the village—or town, as the Capriotes call it—and hurried through the tiny, odd streets which give the place so singularly characteristic an appearance. One is constantly passing through covered passages that seem like tunnels, or under arches which, from above, must look like odd, useless bridges. As the streets are of the narrowest, and the people seem to live more out of the houses than in them, one has a bewildered feeling that one is walking through the houses themselves. Every now and then, however, a glimpse of the deep blue sky above—a delightfully picturesque and Eastern-looking break in the flat-roofed, tumble-down houses, with their occasional grape-covered *pergole* or projecting porches—makes one realize that one is indeed threading one's much-impeded way through the streets of a southern village. There is not a single carriage in Capri, for the simple reason that the roads, or, more properly

speaking, paths, are much too precipitous, narrow, and ill kept to allow of any such luxuries. If, in the course of time, such an innovation as civilized roads should be introduced in this island, and carriages become an accustomed sight—which the fates grant may not happen in my time!—the town would have to be entirely rebuilt, for, in its present condition, any thing much larger than a wheelbarrow would have difficulty in passing: as it is, the donkeys, that constitute the only possible mode of locomotion, often have to stop and squeeze their unfortunate riders close to the wall, to allow some woman, carrying a large bundle of straw or faggots, to pass. It is needless to add that these stoppages are invariably accompanied with much screaming, violent ejaculations, cries of small children, and the strident laugh of lusty maidens, all of which adds more to the oddness of the scene than to its pleasantness; at any rate, it becomes difficult to indulge in any thing like connected thought in the midst of such noise. This Louie soon discovered, so, keeping steadily on her way, walking as rapidly as circumstances would permit, she at last found herself in the country. Seating herself on a large stone by the wayside,

she leaned her head on her hand, according to her wont when she wished to indulge in serious thought.

It is not to be supposed that Louie had allowed her late companions to leave her alone at Capri, without having something like a definite plan with regard to the spending of her precious holiday. She meant to remain where she was for two or, perhaps, three months. Furthermore, she meant to live in the most economical manner possible; she had no idea of spending her little fortune in useless hotel bills, she had other uses for her money in view. It is really too mortifying to have one's heroine indulging in such very practical reflections, but let us pity rather than blame her; sad experience had taught her the value of pounds, shillings, and pence, and—poor thing!—she had not enjoyed those inestimable advantages of society, which give such delightful habits of reckless extravagance to our fashionable young ladies. Louie, therefore, quite unconscious that she was violating all rules of heroineship, began forming plans for the future, which brought a glow of pleasure to her cheeks. She was resolved never again to be either governess or companion; she would be independent, and

have a tiny home of her own. A vision of a little cottage in the suburbs of London, with a patch of garden in front, rose enticingly before her mind's eye. In such a cottage she might perhaps, with the aid of two or three ladies who had been kind to her on former occasions, get up a small day-school; she would be willing to work hard all day, so that she might have the evenings to herself. Then she had another plan, still more delightful, in view; but this was an ambitious one in comparison. She had considerable talent for drawing, and to the cultivation of this talent, she intended to devote the whole of her holiday. In the beautiful scenery which surrounded her she would find a hundred subjects for sketches; and, should she make very decided progress, she might, instead of the day-school, have drawing and water-colour classes, which would be far more pleasant, and more remunerative too.

This glowing day-dream was interrupted suddenly by a clear, strong voice at her side, saying,—

“Signora, volete prender’ un asino?”

Looking up, she saw a young woman smiling with eyes and lips, and pointing to a well-saddled donkey which she was leading. Louie

had been so absorbed in her own thoughts, that she had not heard the approach of the creature and its pretty mistress. As she looked up she smiled too, partly at her own abstraction, partly in response to the bright glance of the peasant's sparkling eyes. Without answering the question directly, however, but attracted by the young, sympathetic face—and perhaps, too, obeying that impulse which draws youth to youth—she said, in good Italian, and employing the caressing *tu*, which has, I think, a peculiar charm to us who so completely ignore that sweet second person,—

“What is your name, pretty one?”

“I am called Marianina, to serve you!”

CHAPTER V.

“LA GROTTA DEL MATRIMONIO.”

ALL that was artistic in Louie's nature—and her instincts were eminently artistic—was roused as, with a rapid glance, she scanned Marianina. She remembered having heard that the Greek blood of the first settlers could still be traced in the peculiar beauty of these Capriotes, and this she now realized for the first time. The young peasant was rather under than above the middle height, but so well proportioned that one forgot to think of her stature. Her head, rather small, was proudly set, and the features called to mind some marble Grecian goddess; the line of the forehead and nose was almost straight, the upper-lip short, the mouth, with full, well-defined lips, was rather large, and the chin firmly modelled. The face would have seemed a little heavy, per-

haps, but for the sparkling, magnificent Italian eyes. Her black hair, which was very abundant and glossy, was elaborately braided, low on the head, and secured by a long silver bodkin. There is no distinctive costume at Capri, and the eye, on *fête* days, is often offended by glaring contrasts of crude colours; but the working clothes, toned down by hard usage, often assume neutral tints very pleasing, and which give value to the *fazzoletto*, or bright-hued neckerchief, which is an invariable part of the dress. Marianina's dingy skirt was looped up for the convenience of walking, and took graceful folds, while showing the bare feet and ankles. A chemise of very coarse linen, with large open sleeves, a little bodice of dark grey stuff, and an orange *fazzoletto* completed her costume. As she leaned against her donkey, looking down smilingly at the strange lady, and playing with a branch which had served her as whip, she formed a not unworthy model for a painter. But Marianina, notwithstanding her picturesque appearance, had a practical mind; she was anxious to earn another franc, beside the one which her last customer had some minutes before given her, and so she again urged the advisability of a donkey-ride to Louie.

"The roads are rough for the little feet of a signorina like you, and Biancarella is so safe; then, too, I know all the pretty places that strangers admire."

Louie laughed and allowed herself to be persuaded; she recognized the force of the girl's reasoning, especially as, fearing to wander far alone, she had as yet seen but few of the points of interest of the island. When she was safely in the saddle Marianina's business look disappeared, and she evidently felt at liberty to be communicative and friendly. These donkey-girls, who come much in contact with the strangers visiting the island, acquire a certain ease which rarely, if ever, descends to bad taste. Louie, who enjoyed watching her companion's expressive face, determined to make her talk.

"Do you know who I am, Marianina?"

"If I know who you are? *Madonna mia!* surely. You were always with the Donna di Marmo; and we said among ourselves that it was no wonder you were so white and sad; she drained the life out of you, Signorina! In our sea there are creatures that cling to those who are unlucky enough to come near them, and suck, suck, suck, till they suck all the strength

away, and, unless the unfortunate fellow is a very powerful swimmer, they at last drag him to the bottom, and he is seen no more. This terrible miladi was like one of those. Ah! often, the women who carried her in her big chair, said they would not go again; but, you see, we are all very poor; life is hard; so they went again and again, for the sake of the *carlini*. But"—and she crossed herself—"one must not talk ill of the dead, for then their ghosts will appear at one's bedside. Signorina," she added, in a different key, seeing, with quick intuition, that the subject was a painful one, "they say that you are going to stay here some time. Listen! you must always take your donkey from me, will you not? We shall get to be great friends, I am sure of it; and I will tell you all my secrets."

"Suppose you begin at once. How old are you?"

"I was eighteen at the last rains, and it is nearly two years since I was married."

"Married! Are you married?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Marianina, with a half-shy, half-proud look that was pleasant to see; "my *sposo* would not wait, so what could I do? And now I have a little one. Oh, he is such a

darling! Some day I will take the Signorina to my house. It is a poor place, it is true; but then my *bambino* is as beautiful as any lady's. And you, are you married?"

"No."

"But you are *promessa*?"

"No;" and Louie smiled as the bright, keen eyes of the peasant scanned her with a *naïve* astonishment which seemed to say, "But why not? You are not, after all, displeasing to look at." Aloud, however, she said, consolingly,—

"Ah! but it will come. You have time; you are, perhaps, about twenty?"

"I am more than three and twenty," quietly answered Louie, enjoying the growing astonishment of her guide, to whom a lover had been merely the last of her playthings.

"You do not look so old," thoughtfully remarked Marianina, who, in consequence of hard labour and short commons, looked more than her own age.

"You think it dreadful, Marianina, not to have a lover when one is as old as I am, do you not?"

"Ah!" she mischievously suggested, "you perhaps hide some secret. Ladies are not like us; we tell every thing; but with you it is

different. We who live down at the Marina are like one large family, and when we young women get together in the evening, dear! how we chatter about our own affairs and those of our neighbours! Is it not odd, Signorina, when girls get together they always talk of their lovers? and my Giovanni says that when young men sit down, after a hard day's work, smoking their pipes, they invariably talk of the girls they love. Is it not a funny thing?" and this unconscious philosopher laughed and showed her splendid white teeth.

"Very," answered Louie, who felt like a novice by the side of this wise little woman who was five years her junior. "But where are you taking me?" for, during this talk, they had been going along a narrow path, which was new to her.

"I am going to take you," maliciously remarked Marianina, "where all maidens should go—to the Grotta del Matrimonio!"

Louie remembered having read something about this *grotta*, the real name of which is "Grotta di Matromania," changed by the people of the island into the far more interesting and suggestive one of "Matrimonio."

"I am resigned to my fate," laughed Louie,

to whom the reaction from so many sad months of repression, gave a buoyancy to her spirits which astonished herself. "But on the way you must tell me more about yourself. What does your husband do? and where is he?"

"Ah, Signorina!" and Marianina's bright face became clouded, "it is now as though I were not married at all; for more than half the long year my Giovanni, and many others, are away on the African coast fishing for coral. It is hard work, and uses the strength of the young men. They get but little pay, after all; if they bring back each three or four hundred *lire*, for the whole seven or eight months, they do well. Do you know, Giovanni will not let me wear the coral ear-drops that come to me from my grandmother, because when he sees them, a kind of fury comes over him, to think of the many days and nights of toil and danger, of the long separation from wife and children, which brave men have to suffer in order to procure those silly baubles—so I only put them on when he is away. But, you know," and Marianina became cheerfully confidential again, "men take things more in earnest than we do. Once, just after I was married, I went over to Naples with Giovanni to buy the things for our little house, and when

I saw the beautiful coral, red and soft pink, made into lovely shapes and displayed in the shop windows, I could hardly tear myself away. I did not think then of all the dark nights on the African coast; I only thought of the beautiful ornaments. As I was looking into a large shop a young girl about my age, with hair like sunshine, went in and bought a necklace of the palest coral. She was English, I know, because I heard her say, ‘Yes, yes,’ and I know what that means. She played with the different ornaments, and put a wreath, such as the queen of the sea might wear, on her fair head, and, *Mamma mia!* she looked so pretty! I do not know why, but I began to cry, and Giovanni dragged me away, and scolded me, too, quite crossly. You see, it seems so strange that some girls should have to work and work and get old before their time, and then leave children who must work and work after them, while others have all the good things thrown at them, as it were. But, *Dio mio!* what is the use of making oneself unhappy by thinking of those things? Ah, Signorina!”—Marianina, with the vivacity of her race, went from one subject to another, with the greatest facility—“what a place that Naples is! what noise! I

was half dead for a week after my return.. How people keep their lives 'is a wonder to me. I had to cling to my husband with both hands to keep from being knocked over. Horses are dreadful creatures ; they go so much faster than our fastest donkeys, and drag those barks with wheels that people call carriages, with such a rattling noise, that it quite takes one's breath away. Oh ! to go to Naples once is enough for a lifetime ; one can talk to one's children afterwards of the boats on wheels and the glittering shops, and make them open their eyes. But, Signorina, you will think me a great chatterbox ; I tell you every thing in one breath, do I not ? Now, look, this is a fine view," and she assumed a funny little air of a cicerone as they emerged on to an open space on the brow of a hill.

And indeed it was a fine view. Louie looked down and thought she had never seen water so deeply, yet so transparently blue. She was now on the side of the island opposite to that which she was accustomed to see, and it was the Gulf of Salerno which stretched before her in all its broad beauty. The ground broke away almost at her feet in an irregular rocky precipice, less steep in some parts than in others. To the left she caught a glimpse of

bold rocks, among which, her guide informed her, was the “Natural Arch,” one of the most beautiful of the Capri curiosities; to the right rose a still higher hill, and as she turned round she could distinguish the shape of the whole island. Such a tiny spot as it really is, to contain so much of wild beauty! the greatest width does not exceed two miles, and the circumference is about nine miles. The comparative level of the centre is occupied by the town, and by scattered houses with their vineyards, then rise bold, rocky mountains, giving to the island a great variety of aspects. Susceptible as Louie was to the impression of the grand in nature, it seemed to her as though she could not sufficiently feast her eyes on the scene before her; she loved most of all to look out upon the water, and to see the lines of the coast melting, with an indescribable variety of tints, into the blue of the sea.

“Now,” observed Marianina, who was satisfied with the effect produced, and who possessed a certain practical good sense which forbade the wasting of time, “now let us go down to the *grotta*, the way is not hard or dangerous like that to the arch; there are steps cut in the rock that go quite down to the grotto. Who

knows," she added, looking up from under her eyebrows, "but we may find you a *sposo* there?"

Louie laughed and followed her guide; the two chatted together with the freedom of long acquaintance. Before they reached their destination, Louie had unfolded her plans, and at last asked whether Marianina knew of any respectable house, where she might find more privacy, and also more economical arrangements than at the hotel. The young peasant knit her brows in thought, and then exclaimed, gleefully, "The *canonico* has a room to let, and his niece can see that you are comfortable—that is the very thing! we will go there on our return—that is," she added, with her pretty shy look, "if the Signorina is willing to trust to me."

"Certainly I trust you, Marianina!" said Louie, heartily; the girl—for, notwithstanding her married dignity, it was impossible to think of this young thing except as a girl—looked up with quick pleasure and impulsively kissed the white hand which, ever since the descent began, had rested in her own brown one.

"Did I not say that we should be good friends? And now, Signorina, we have arrived at the Grotta del Matrimonio."

They passed through a sort of dark vaulted place, which once, it is supposed, had formed part of the residence assigned to the priests attached to the temple, and presently came to the temple itself. This is the veriest ruin of a ruin; it was originally built in a natural cave, and has been so modified by time that one asks oneself which part is the work of man, and which is that of nature. Still, antiquarians, who fortunately often have a good deal of imagination which serves to eke out their knowledge, pretend that there are distinct traces of Roman architecture; at any rate, some fragments found in the grotto are certainly to be seen in Naples, while the white marble altar-slab of the temple, is now in the British Museum. As Louie's eyes became accustomed to the half darkness, she saw in the farthest recess something which still retained the shape of an altar, where probably bloody sacrifices had once been offered up to a deity, whose very name is now a subject of learned dispute. But what interested the young girl far more than these vestiges of a dead past, was the living beauty of sunlit nature, the glorious expanse of the Salerno gulf framed by the dark, irregular arch of the grotto. As she turned to get a better view of this scene, she

found that the place was not, as she had thought, quite solitary. A figure which, leaning against a jutting rock, had at first been lost among the dark shadows, now advanced, and Louie recognized the young man who had irritated Lady Thurlow, by bowing from the boat, at the opening of this story. Instantly Louie, who while chatting with the Capriote had lost all her usual cold shyness, grew embarrassed, and returned his bow in silence. But the stranger was evidently not easily repulsed, he took advantage of the circumstances of their first meeting to address a few commonplace remarks to her; then, suddenly changing his manner, and half smiling, he said,—

“Pardon me, Miss Farland—you see I know your name—but we are country-people meeting far from home, and apparently as solitary one as the other; would it be presumptuous under such circumstances, for me to express the sympathy with which your late trial has inspired me? One knows every thing about every body here at Capri, and I heard consequently that you were alone at the death-bed of Lady—I never heard her proper name, and always call her, like the people here, ‘la Donna di Marmo.’ It was a trying position for a young lady.”

"You are very kind," murmured Louie, feeling, despite her English coldness, the influence of the hearty manner, and sweet-toned voice of the speaker.

"Not at all. Now, if we two were thrown from some wrecked ship on a desert island, there would be no impropriety in sympathizing with and helping each other, would there? Under such circumstances you would not, I fancy, refuse to share the shell-fish or wild birds that I might be lucky enough to find. For all social purposes, at least, this is a desert island to me, and, from what I hear, it is the same to you—do not misunderstand me," he added, hastily, "I do not wish to force my acquaintance upon you, I understand my country's code of social laws too well for that; but I have lived much abroad, have been knocked here and there and every where, so that I have acquired a rough frankness in talking, which forces me to say whatever comes to my mind: what I wish you to understand is, that, having once been fortunate enough to offer you some slight help, I feel that I have acquired a certain right to offer you my services, should you on any future occasion happen to need them. I am but a poor devil of an artist, but even a poor

devil of an artist may be of use sometimes," and he laughed; "my name is Harry Lester, and the Capriotes call me 'l'Inglese biondo.' Tell me, I do not shock you with my free-and-easy way of talking? You see, I have an odd feeling that we are old acquaintances, having seen you and—pardon the presumption—pitied you so often. You are not offended?"

"No," said Louie simply, looking up.

The face to which she frankly raised her eyes was a very handsome one, with good, clean-cut features, and a fair, roughish beard; the hair was peculiar, curly, and so sunny, that it seemed to give forth light of its own. The great charm of the face, however, was in its smile, which was singularly radiant, and always provoked, by the power of its geniality, a smile in return. In repose, handsome though the face still was, it was less pleasing; there were lines of discontent about the mouth which even the thick moustache did not quite hide. This young man looked about twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, was tall, well-made, and, though carelessly dressed, looked entirely like a gentleman. Louie thought, after her quick survey, that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen.

After a few more insignificant words Mr.

Lester took up his sketch-book and pencils, which he had evidently been using before Louie's arrival, and, bowing easily, left the grotto. When he was out of hearing, Marianina, who had stood by discreetly silent, said, archly,—

“Ah, Signorina mia! ecco lo sposo—Mamma mia! quanto è bello!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGINNING OF LOUIE'S HOLIDAY.

THE *canonico* to whom Marianina conducted Louie was the head priest of the Capri Cathedral, and lived in one of the largest houses of the village. A high gate, or, rather, door opened on a courtyard entirely shaded by vines trained on trellis-work; this trellis-work was supported on one side by a high stone wall, on the other by pillars which, perhaps, had once upheld some chapel's vaulted roof; the house would have looked neglected enough any where else, but at Capri it was regarded as quite a model of elegance and comfort. A stone staircase outside the house led to the upper story, and on each side of this staircase stood a twisted column of white marble, perfectly useless, it is true, but which added greatly to the effect. To the left, one guessed at, rather than saw, a somewhat

extensive vineyard or, perhaps, garden. In point of fact, the *canonico*, as Louie afterwards discovered, was vulnerable on at least one point. If one praised his wine, his own particular, carefully prepared wine, his heart was won. The cultivation of his vines, the watching of the huge bunches that hung in ripe lusciousness from their stalks, then the autumn-gathering of the fruit, formed his great delight. Those who knew him best said that when superintending the crushing of the grapes in immense vats, encouraging the bare-footed women and girls, to whom this work is a delight, he was sublime in his excitement. Some also added, that if he spent days and nights, too, ruminating on any improvement which the experience of others, or the study of books, could suggest, it was not simply out of abstract enthusiasm, but that his practical enjoyment of the wine was quite equal to his care in its preparation. But there are evil tongues every where. At any rate, the wine made from his own private vineyard has a reputation which might gratify any cultivator, clerical or lay.

When Louie and her guide reached their destination, the *canonico* was taking the evening air in the vine-covered courtyard, walking with

a certain solemnity up and down, now and then addressing a few words to a group of women clustered about the door, but oftenest gazing upward—not, it must be owned, in religious ecstasy, but in a comfortable, paternal sort of approbation of the green bunches of grapes which, even in their present undeveloped state, promised much for the coming autumn. His dress could scarcely have been called clerical, but then he was at home, and surely a man has a right to take his ease at home! Abroad he always appeared in cassock and shovel hat; now, however, as he walked up and down, his hands crossed behind his back, he presented a singularly contradictory appearance; his shoes were priestly, with the orthodox silver buckles, while his well-made legs were covered with purple stockings. Thus far the priest appeared. It is from respect for that character that in this description I commenced—in all reverence be it spoken—at the wrong end. The rest of his dress was unique. A shirt of the coarsest linen, generously open about the throat, and a pair of knee-breeches, somewhat ragged and patched in various ways, that once might have been grey, but from much usage had been toned down to a yellowish white, completed the dress. Add to

this that the dignity of his profession clung to him in spite of his appearance, that his bow was almost courtly, and that the keen intelligence of his dark eyes gave force to the rather narrow, sun-burnt, and wrinkled face, and you have the faithful portrait of "il Signor Canonico Monseratto." He was a man nearly sixty years of age, with short, crisp, whitish hair, short in stature and rather spare of figure.

When he saw the two young women approach, he stopped in his walk, and waited, his hands still behind his back, till they should address him. Of course he knew Louie by sight, for during the six weeks that she had already passed at Capri, he had often seen her, both at church and during her walks; he also knew all that his parishioners could tell him of her history, for he was curious by nature and not averse to a little gossip; but nothing of this appeared in his rather ceremonious way of saluting her. Marianina explained the object of their visit. When she had finished, he called out, "Carmella, Carmella!" At the sound of his voice a wee, toddling child ran as best it could toward him, clapping its hands and crowing. It was pretty to see the sudden change of expression in the priest's face as he caught up the little thing.

"This is our house-angel, my niece Carmella's little daughter. Give a kiss to your old *nonno*," said he, and the little girl, putting her chubby arms about his neck, obeyed with glee. The appellation *nonno*, which means grandfather, was about as unclerical as his dress, but, notwithstanding this, it had a great charm in his mouth. While the child was being admired and petted, its mother came forward. She was a young woman of about five and twenty, dressed little better than the peasants about her, with a pleasing, cheerful face and hearty manner. She had received some education—that is, she could read and write—and was her uncle's housekeeper and devoted admirer. She had known sorrow, good-natured and smiling though she was : her husband had deserted her less than a year after marriage, and had left her entirely dependent on the *canonico* ; he was now supposed to be somewhere in that vast, far-away, mysterious region called America, and Carmella confessed to her friends that she never expected to see him again. She would wipe her fine eyes in saying this, but, if the truth were known, she would probably have been more dismayed than pleased had he, in fact, returned to take her and her child away from their present excellent quarters.

The room to be let was at the top of the house, in a kind of square tower, reached by rather treacherous-looking, narrow stairs, quite independent from the stone staircase already mentioned. From the one large window there was a beautiful view of the bay, with Naples in the distance, and this was ample compensation to Louie for the extreme simplicity, not to say poverty, of the furniture. The place was clean, and as that was the principal thing to be looked to, after a certain amount of talking, an agreement was made by which Louie was to have her meals cooked in the house, and to receive the attendance of the one servant. Good-natured Carmella made a hundred promises as to the care which should be taken of her young lodger.

"Then," added she, "there is the garden, which will be entirely at the Signorina's disposal; it is nearly always solitary, for my uncle spends nearly all his time in the vineyard, or working at his mosaic. Have you seen his mosaic? of course not. Ah! but it is curious; he works at this flooring of his favourite room, as though indeed he were working for his living; with much trouble and research he has amassed a quantity of old marble bits found here and there

on the island—rubbish, one would think, but in his hands these bits become precious; now the floor of that room is like those mosaics one sees at the museum of Naples. I was once in Naples myself—what a place it is! My uncle made a drawing—for he can do a little of every thing—of a flooring that some learned men found almost a hundred years ago up yonder at Castiglione, and this flooring of his favourite room is an exact copy of it.—Ah, yes, we shall make the Signorina comfortable, never fear, Marianina. The English, I am told, like much to be alone—a singular taste, to be sure! but one which she can indulge in this house. There are the studios down-stairs, it is true, but they scarcely seem to belong to the house at all, though, to be sure, the painter who occupies the large one sleeps in it.”

By the time the last arrangements had been made, the long spring evening was already drawing to a close; but Louie's impatience to take possession of her new abode could not be restrained, and an hour later she, to the astonishment of Carmella, stood in the turret-room with all her modest stock of worldly goods about her. To have left the hotel, and with it all things which might remind her of her past

life, was inexpressibly delightful to Louie, and she looked around her scantily furnished chamber with a feeling of proprietorship, which was as delightful as it was novel.

The next morning Louie rose from her clean, hard bed with a perfect fever of work upon her. She was eager to see whether her hand had forgotten its cunning, for it was almost a year since she had touched her pencils and paints. She scarcely allowed herself time to take her breakfast, and then slipped quietly down-stairs and went to the garden, where she hoped to find some subject for a first sketch. This garden, which, as Carmella had predicted, was quite deserted, was an irregular piece of ground that would scarcely have received so dignified a name any where else; a vine-covered arbour formed the principal walk and led to a dilapidated corner, which was the prettiest bit in the whole place. There was an end of broken wall, half-concealed by flowering shrubs, from over which one had a glimpse of the distant water through an intervening arch connecting two houses, delightfully old and dirty, or, as the artists call it, low in tone. Then to the right, up two or three stones, which formed somewhat unsafe steps, there was a seat nearly hidden by trees, or,

rather, tall shrubs; this, Louie thought, would be a charming place to come and hide herself when she wanted to spend a quiet hour in reading or dreaming on warm, drowsy Sunday afternoons. She looked longingly at the view over the broken wall; but it was complicated and too difficult for a first attempt, so she turned reluctantly away. At the other end of the garden, however, she found what she wanted. A little aside from the covered walk was an arch, the utility of which was very problematical; it seemed to Louie to have been spared by Father Time for her especial benefit; there were vines and other creeping plants festooning the dark broken stones, and through the arch one saw a bit of the vineyard lighted by the sun in a way to delight a lover of striking contrasts. Beside, at a convenient distance for sketching, was an old wooden bench, perfectly shaded by the one large tree of the place. As Louie settled herself and opened her large sketch-book she sighed, "Ah, this is happiness!"

The long hours passed quietly away; but the glow of contentment left her face as the afternoon wore on, and she looked tired and dispirited. The truth was, she found sketching directly from nature more difficult than she had

anticipated, and the prospect of earning her bread as drawing-teacher now appeared to her chimerical. As she looked from her water-colour drawing to nature, and back again to the drawing, tears of disappointment filled her eyes. To tell the truth, Louie, though she would not willingly have owned this even to herself, was beginning to feel sadly lonely and deserted. It was with a feeling of relief that she now remembered that, in a moment of reckless extravagance, she had engaged Marianina and her donkey by the month, and that, consequently, when the hour appointed for the evening ride came, she should see the bright, brown face, and hear the ringing, sweet laugh in which she delighted.

In the midst of her melancholy reflections she became aware that an odour foreign to the garden or vineyard, came to her with the soft afternoon breeze. At first she was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to reflect upon this, but suddenly it struck her that this odour, foreign to garden or vineyard, was nothing more or less than the fragrance of a cigar. She looked up quickly, then blushed as she saw that Mr. Lester was leaning against the tree under whose shade she herself was sitting, quietly

smoking and examining her sketch with critical attention!

"I beg your pardon for startling you, but I always take a turn in the garden after my day's work. By the way, does my cigarette annoy you?—shall I throw it away? Do not say 'I do not mind it' out of politeness, pray!"

"It is really any thing but disagreeable to me."

"Thank you. As I was saying, it is my habit to come down here after work; my studio is up there, at the *cantonico's*—why do you start? Oh, I see; you are the stranger who took the tower-room last evening—how odd! Well, I shall not disturb you much, as my quarters are quite in another part of the house, and if we occasionally meet in this garden, which is common ground, why what harm will there be in it? How intently you were studying your work as I came up! you did not even hear my steps on the gravel. I did not know that you were an artist too."

"Do not humiliate me! artist, indeed! I——" and, despite her usual self-command, Louie's voice trembled; the long day's unsuccessful work was beginning to tell upon her nerves. When he saw that she was really distressed, Mr.

Lester's half-bantering manner changed in a moment, and he said, kindly,—

"Perhaps I can be of use to you here. Allow me," and without further ceremony he took her place; he remained some minutes looking at the poor little sketch with as much seriousness as though indeed it had been the work of a fellow artist, then he said,—

"Miss Farland, do you know that there is the evidence of considerable talent here?"

"Do you really think so?" exclaimed she with an earnestness which made him smile.

"Yes, I really do. Mind, I do not wish to flatter you; I should be no true artist, or true friend, were I to do so. Your sketch is undoubtedly bad; the treatment of those leaves is heavy, and your arch is out of drawing; it is quite evident, too, that you work like a novice; still the feeling of the thing is there. Now look——" and he proceeded to explain his meaning, pitilessly bringing out the defects and, on the other hand, showing her the traces of genuine talent. When he had finished she gave a great sigh of relief.

"Oh, I am so much obliged to you!" this she said with such energy of feeling that he quite laughed aloud. His laugh was so melodious

that, despite the depression of feeling which had not yet left her, and despite also the reserve which she considered necessary in her unprotected position, she could not resist joining in it. There are surely few more effective means of doing away with all stiffness, than a hearty laugh in which two persons join with equal pleasure.

CHAPTER VII.

A VOICE BLENDING WITH THE SUMMER AIR.

“FORGIVE me,” said Mr. Lester, when he had recovered his seriousness, “but your excessive earnestness, and its inadequate cause, quite upset my gravity. Pray,” he added, as he leaned once more against the tree, “are you as earnest in the other things of this life as in your desire of improvement in art?”

“I think so. That is, I scarcely know; I seem now for the first time to be acting on my own responsibility—making my own acquaintance, so to speak;” as she said this she smiled. There was sometimes in Louie’s manner of speaking a slight hesitation, which claimed the attention of the listener by exciting his curiosity; it was as though, in the excessive truthfulness of her nature, she feared to say a thing to which she might not, after mature consideration, entirely

subscribe. "It is very difficult to know oneself—that is a truism, is it not? but a truism which comes most forcibly on one, when the usual routine of a life is broken in upon, and new circumstances, new phases of feeling arise."

"You are not only earnest, but analytical, I see; as for me, I am neither. Sometimes I think that among my ancestors there must have been one or two of those half-human creatures, of which one reads in old legends, that had the feelings, the outward appearance of men and women, without that most unpleasant thing we call moral responsibility—happy, weird folk! There, now you are looking at me with a puzzled expression in which there is a good deal of disapprobation! Pray do not expect me to defend my theories, or to reason about them. I cannot—I would not if I could. All I know is, that the sunshine which floods this little Eden of an island seems at this moment to be reflected in my nature; let me enjoy it unreasoningly. We are, materially speaking, far away from all signs of our most detestable, over-praised, modern civilization; let us forget it entirely; why should we not be like the old-time inhabitants of this very spot—children of nature; what they were many centuries ago, before the Romans

came to bring luxury and degradation in their train? Can you not fancy that when this was a Greek colony, it was indeed a spot fit to live in? For my part, I feel convinced that the Olympian gods were much in the habit of walking among these olives and vines. I see, you scarcely know what to make of me, Miss Farland, it is a bad habit of mine to think aloud; I sometimes bewilder my acquaintances a good deal in the course of half an hour's chat. Please say something, or I shall take your silence as a proof of displeasure."

"I am not displeased, though perhaps I am, with the rest of your—acquaintances, somewhat bewildered."

"Why did you hesitate, may I ask, when you came to the word 'acquaintances'? The most flattering construction which I could put on that hesitation would be, that you wished to substitute the word 'friends.' Perhaps, on the contrary, you hesitated, thinking that, in point of fact, we are little more than strangers to each other. It is true, chance—no! there is no such thing as chance—fate, let us say, has thrown us together; it is true that, thanks to my artistic studies, I am happy enough to be of some little use to you; it is true that there is a

certain similarity in circumstances, age, and, if I may be bold enough to add, a certain sympathy of ideas and tastes, between us ; but all that must count for nothing, for—O terrible and irremediable calamity!—we did not meet in some crowded ball-room, or in some solemnly stupid drawing-room ; no simpering and fashionably-dressed hostess has pronounced those cabalistic words, ‘Miss Farland, permit me to present Mr. Lester to you,’ and therefore, according to the world’s code of laws, I, am a bold transgressor to dare to speak as I am speaking ; I should content myself with lifting my hat as I pass you. Do you know, Miss Farland, that the most characteristic slang word of this slangy age of ours, the word which most vividly paints our society, is—humbug ?”

Louie listened quietly to the excited young man, and then, raising her eyes to his, said,—

“ You talk of things I do not understand. I do not belong to what you call ‘society.’ For me, no fashionably-dressed hostess could ever have pronounced those cabalistic words of which you speak, for never in my life have I been in a crowded ball-room, and my place in the ‘solemnly stupid drawing-room’ has ever been

in the humble corner awarded by custom to the poor governess or companion——”

“And therefore,” eagerly interrupted Harry Lester, “the cabalistic words are unnecessary, are they not? We can at least reap this advantage from our social insignificance—we can dare to dispense with society’s forms, we can dare to be natural, can we not? Ah, there! you are silent, and begin to manifest an uneasy desire to leave this garden, this common ground, where it seems to me that I have a right to address you—how clearly one can read your passing thoughts in your face! Instead of the formal introduction which circumstances have denied us, permit me, then, to say two words about myself. You may perhaps wonder to find me so isolated, mixing with none of the other artists. I will tell you the simple reason of this. From my very childhood I have struggled with a curse—yes, it is a curse! I have naturally extravagant tastes, I love the beautiful even in the common things of life, and—I am poor. Then my art has been to me at once a blessing and the reverse. A certain picture-dealer, finding that I had facility in painting the kind of pictures which, to use a shopman’s expression, ‘take’ with the public, managed to get

me in his power ; in other words, he lent me money, and I spent it. You see, about the same time, I became something of a favourite in society ; I have a good voice, which ladies found pleased their guests, and relieved the dulness of their tea-parties. Naturally I became more and more in debt to this man, and was forced to devote the whole of my time to his service. I have not been entirely without those dreams of ambition which come to sweeten the labours of so many young artists. I should like well enough to devote all my energies to the producing of some picture which, placed side by side with other serious works, might, perhaps, win some praise, and through which I might in time become known ; but, you see, I commenced wrong. I degraded the talent nature gave me, and now I am reaping the fruit of my folly."

"It is not too late to——" said Louie, with a hesitating diffidence, which gave to the implied advice a great charm.

"You are right ; it is not too late. I am working early and late, painting the pictures still owing to this man, and then—then I shall at last be free. That is why I keep myself away from temptation ; there are men here who would, I know, be congenial to me, artistically speaking,

but if I associated with them I am well aware that my virtuous resolutions would melt away. You see, I did not choose loneliness for its own sake; I often crave society, sympathy——”

“And that is why you seek mine”—this, as will easily be understood, was not spoken aloud; it was a thought which crossed Louie’s mind like a flash, and which she instantly banished, as unworthy.

At that moment the servant came to announce that Marianina, with her donkey, was at the door. Louie rose immediately; there was a little return of shy coldness in her parting bow, a coldness which did not escape the young man.

“Ah, Signorina *mia*, how long the time has seemed till this hour!” exclaimed Marianina, with naïve flattery. Louie answered with a bright smile; she felt very light-hearted; perhaps it was the reaction from the afternoon’s depression; perhaps it arose from some other motive; on this subject she did not choose to be what Mr. Lester had called analytical.

The evening before, on the way back from the grotto, the young peasant had described her tiny home down at the Marina, and had spoken so much of her child, of her mode of life—in fact, of

every thing which concerned her and hers—that Louie, half to satisfy her own curiosity, half to please her communicative guide, had promised that the next excursion should be down to the Marina, or beach, which, owing to Lady Thurlow's truly English dislike of going where people could be seen, she scarcely knew. From some height she had, however, seen the graceful bend of the little port, with its ragged fringe of irregular houses, its boats drawn up on the beach, and its swarm of brown children of all ages rolling about in scanty attire on the hard, smooth stones. Louie and her guide passed by all these, and then scrambled over some rough rising ground at the extreme right.

“Ah, you will see, Signorina, what a poor place my home is—but then it is all mine, and that is a comfort. We are separated from the rest of the people, which is not pleasant, for one likes, when sitting on the door-step after work, to be able to throw a word to one's neighbours; but when we married there was no vacant house at the Marina itself to be had, so we had to come up here. See what a singular place it is! It was once a fort, built by the English; but it fell to ruin, and now the rich man of our place has bought it and is making a number of little houses

within the old walls. Mine is the only one that is quite finished, and at night I sometimes feel a little frightened to think that there is but one neighbour within call—she is an old woman who is very kind to me. Now, Signorina, come in, for we have arrived. I will fetch the little one, who is with my good neighbour.”

It was, indeed, an odd place, shut in from the busy, noisy little world outside, and looking down on a quiet, wild part of the bay. The half-finished tenements which, as Marianina had explained, were built within the old fort had truly a ghostly quietness, which was more soothing to Louie’s nerves probably than to those of the warm-blooded, vivacious Capriote. Marianina’s house consisted of two tolerably large rooms: the first contained a huge bed and several chests, and pieces of queer furniture made of very dark wood, sometimes curiously carved; the other room, which opened from the first and had no other outlet, was nearly empty, and would doubtless, in time, serve for the stowing away of the children, should Marianina, like many of her friends and relatives, increase the world’s population by from nine to eighteen souls. There was a little kitchen, too; but that was detached from the dwelling. Louie noticed, with national delight,

that, poor as the place certainly was, it was clean—remarkably so, considering that it was the dwelling of Italian peasants.

“*Eccolo!*” exclaimed the child-like mother, as with eyes dancing with pleasure she brought in a sturdy, crowing, brown-skinned baby. Louie played with this little mortal with such good-will that the proud mother said,—

“It is not possible, Signorina, that I know you only from yesterday; it seems as though we had been friends for years. You do not think me presumptuous, do you? I do not forget that I am a *contadina* and that you are a lady; but then the heart does not know those differences, and when I see you with my little one in your arms, it is as though I must embrace you both together. Oh, how I shall talk to my husband of you when he comes home from the coral fishing!”

“Perhaps he will be jealous—take care, Marianina!”

The idea was so amusing to her that she laughed merrily, showing her two rows of perfect teeth. Marianina’s laugh was delightful to hear; as she herself said, on one occasion, “The people about here say that they can always tell when I am coming, for my laugh comes first, and then I follow!”

“Now let us go to what I call my garden;” and Marianina, taking up the child with a funny assumption of matronly capability, led the way up some steps to a sort of platform built out on the rocks, where once, no doubt, a cannon or two had stood, but where now tomatoes and other vegetables grew in kindly communion with a few common flowers. The view from this garden platform was very charming; there were rocks below and around, a broad expanse of water, and the high cliffs of the shore to the right. “Here,” added Marianina, “the *Inglese biondo* comes very often; he has made a picture from this garden, and I suppose has an affection for it. I should not wonder much if he came down this evening.” This was very demurely said, but a quick suspicion crossed Louie’s mind that the *Inglese biondo* had made surreptitious inquiries as to their probable *but-de-promenade*. Whether the suspicion was correct or not she never discovered; it is certain, however, that before very long the curly, sunny head of the young man was seen above the last step leading to the platform.

“So, Miss Farland, you have taken possession of all my favourite haunts, I see. I am particularly fond of the view from this point; and as

to this young beggar," he continued, tossing up Marianina's baby, to its infinite delight, "we are old friends. If you will permit me, I will show you some day a scene I have painted from here; this small specimen of humanity figures in the foreground with a ragged bit of a shirt and 'never a thing beside!'"

Then the charm of the evening kept both the young people silent for some minutes. Louie sat on a stone near the edge of the platform, looking not down on the bold, wild rocks below, but out on the quiet waters, now brilliant with the reflection of the sun as it slowly sank toward the horizon. A certain feeling of well-being invaded her nature which she would not reason about; it was not merely that the artistic element in her rejoiced in the beauty of sea and distant coast, and high rocks made glorious by the glowing sunset tints; it was also that indescribable feelings, long frozen by cold formalities, began to wake, to revel in the warmth, in the sunlight, in the soft sea-breeze that played with her hair. Under the influence of these feelings her face softened into dreaminess, her lips parted, and a faint colour, exquisite in its delicacy, suffused her pale cheeks; she grew pretty, very pretty even, and the great charm of

this beauty was that it brought no consciousness with it.

During this silence she had been idly playing with stones or lumps of hardened earth, throwing them down into the water. Mr. Lester amused himself with a critical study of the fair girl who sat near him so dreamily abstracted. Finally, he said, with a smile,—

“Really, Miss Farland, you should treat this earth with more respect. Do you know that you are irreverently playing with classic ground?”

“How?” asked Louie, startled out of her reverie, and turning on him wondering eyes which now, for the first time, struck him as being beautiful.

“How? why, do you not know that we are living in a spot consecrated by the greatest poet of ancient times? Do you not know that sage Ulysses sailed on this sea? The island of the dread enchantress, seductive Circe, rose in these waters. Look out yonder—see that melting line of coast where now Castellammare and other villages cluster; science teaches us, or rather hesitatingly offers to our credulity, that that coast once formed an island the delights of which Homer sang. Some pretend that Ischia was the

enchantress's abode, but that again is denied by others, who furthermore say that in those days Vesuvius did not exist, and that it was in the volcanic convulsions of its birth that Circe's island was joined to the mainland. As to this little gem of a place, its appropriate name was 'The Island of the Syrens,' though some people do insist in giving that name to certain small islands in the Salerno Gulf; but we will not listen to such heresy, will we? There! do you not hear the voice of the weird sea-maidens in the low plashing of the water? I believe all those old legends—believe them with the faith of my early boyhood! Ah, Miss Farland, I see that I have again thoroughly bewildered you; perhaps you even think that it has been my special purpose to mislead you, and to cause you to form false ideas of the classics—how you misjudge me! Some day, if you will permit me, I shall take you to a rock on the other side of the island, down at the Piccola Marina, which still bears the name of 'Sirene,' and which antiquarians will tell you is sufficient to prove the solid foundation of those apparently groundless dreams. But, leaving antiquarians out of the question, what further proof do we need of the enchantment of this region than the

influence of its beauty, than the balmy softness, the indefinable subtly electric character of the air, than the murmur of the water as it dies among the many-shaped rocks? Circe was but a name for a thing which is as undying, or, rather, as ever-recurring, as sunshine. The voice of the syrens is not hushed—we hear it once at least in our lifetime!”

“I do not understand you!” exclaimed Louie, more than half-frightened at this rhapsody.

“Do you not? Well,” he continued, with a merry laugh, “I do not much wonder; perhaps I do not understand myself.”

“It seems to me,” said Louie reflectively, as though revolving a puzzling problem, “that you scarcely belong to the age in which we live; that there is—perhaps I shall offend you by what I am going to say—that there is something Pagan about you rather than Christian, and that you would rather follow the old-world laws than those by which we are governed.”

“By Jove! there is a great deal of truth in that, though, frankly, it never struck me before; it needed the instinctive quickness of comprehension of your sex to resolve in a few words that which has often puzzled me. Yes, I am half-Pagan, that is it! and, what is more, I be-

long to the Epicurean sect rather than to any of the sterner forms which merely natural reasoning engendered. I am going to make you despise me, I fear, by confessing that I crave, and crave with a sort of passion too, all the luxuries and comforts which fate has perseveringly denied me. To express in modern phraseology the old sensualist doctrine, which in its nature, however, has not changed during these many centuries—I long for wealth, for money, and for all that money brings. I am tired of poverty; I hate it. I am utterly sceptical as to the virtuous delight of winning one's bread by the sweat of one's brow."

"Oh, Mr. Lester, how can you say so!" and Louie, though indeed much shocked at this confession of feeling, so contrary to all which had been inculcated in her own education, thought with less pride of the few pounds carefully laid by, which she had earned by such hard servitude.

"I knew I should shock you, but there is at least this of good in me: I am no hypocrite; I despise cant of all sorts; I see my own faults and weaknesses; I have not virtue enough to combat them, it is true, but I have not either the petty vice of wishing to hide them. Yes, Miss Farland, I long for wealth, for a goodly

number of thousands a year, by the aid of which I should be able to surround myself with luxuries, to indulge the taste for the beautiful which Nature gave me, without fearing to look at my account-book. O the curse of poverty! it has been with me from my very babyhood, when coveted toys were denied me because they cost a little money! And now, in the very prime of my youth, I am bound hand and foot by it. Why should aspirations be given us without the power of satisfying them?"

"Hush, Mr. Lester, you must not speak like that! I scarcely know how to express myself, for I am neither old enough nor wise enough to give you advice, but I feel instinctively that all these repinings are wrong, and that you are ungrateful to Providence, for, after all, you have very many of the good things of this life lavished on you: you have youth and health; you are free to come or to go unshackled by any of the restraints which—which I myself sometimes feel so acutely; you have a sunny nature, and, furthermore, you have a profession which, in itself, it seems to me, should bring happiness, and through which you may in time win for yourself both fame and a fair share of that wealth which you crave——" Louie faltered; her

natural shyness seemed to return with sudden force ; the character of monitress was a new one to her ; then, too, as she was speaking she felt that she was being listened to eagerly, and that Harry Lester's eyes were intently fixed on her.

"Why do you stop?" he asked, in a softened voice ; "I could listen to such sweet sermonizing for hours. Yes, Miss Farland, I am an ingrate ; yes, I have commenced life from a false point of departure ; but, remember, I have had no guiding hand, no gentle warning voice, as safeguards : you are not more alone in this our world than I."

"Have you, too, no family then?" she asked eagerly, while a sensation of joy shot through her heart. It seemed to her that if he too were nameless, her own fate would not be so hard to bear. But he did not understand the real meaning of her question. He fancied that she was some poor orphan left to her own resources, so he answered her question literally.

"All those who should have been dear to me are but memories now. I have neither father nor mother, sisters nor brothers. But, come!" he added, after a pause, during which Louie's heightened colour faded gradually away, "we must not allow sad thoughts to mar the exquisite

harmony of the evening. See, the sun is just setting; was ever the blending of tints more exquisite?" then, suddenly rising from his recumbent position, he began to sing in subdued tones Gounod's beautiful melody of "Le Soir." Gradually he allowed his magnificent voice greater liberty, and the rich, mellow sounds blended harmoniously with the evening air, while the low plashing of the water formed a fit accompaniment; then his pronunciation was so distinct and perfect that Louie did not lose a syllable of Lamartine's sweet verses:—

"Le soir ramène le silence—
Assis sur ces rochers déserts,
Je suis dans le vague des airs
Le char de la nuit qui s'avance !

"Vénus se lève à l'horizon,
A mes pieds l'étoile amoureuse
De sa lueur mystérieuse
Blanchit les tapis de gazon.

"Tout à coup, détaché des cieux,
Un rayon de l'astre nocturne,
Glissant sur mon front taciturne,
Vient mollement toucher mes yeux !

"Doux reflet d'un globe de flamme,
Charmant rayon—que me veux-tu ?
Viens-tu dans mon sein abattu,
Porter la lumière dans mon âme ?

“ Descends-tu pour me révéler
Des mondes le divin mystère ?
Ces secrets cachés dans la sphère
Où le jour va te rappeler ?

“ Viens-tu dévoiler l'avenir
Au cœur fatigué qui t'implore ?
Rayon divin, es-tu l'aurore
Du jour qui ne doit pas finir ?”

“ Oh, how delicious !” exclaimed Louie, with a sigh, for during the song she had held her breath for very admiration ; indeed, few could hear Harry Lester's singing without being moved, for not only was his voice almost faultless, but he gave such just value to each word—he was so imbued himself with its true meaning, that it would have been strange had he not communicated his own emotions to his hearers.

It was, perhaps, no wonder that this young man should have been somewhat spoiled : with the elegance of his appearance, the charm of his voice, he seemed formed to be the pet of society—it was no wonder, but it was a sad pity.

“ I am so glad you like my singing !” he said, with hearty simplicity ; “ it will be such a pleasure for me to sing to you. I am myself

very fond of these French songs, first, because, as a general thing, they are well within the compass of my voice, and, secondly, because the words and music blend so well together: one never appreciates Victor Hugo, Lamartine, or Alfred de Musset half so well as when their verses are sung. You are musical, I am sure?"

"No, I am not what is called musical—that is, I could listen to good music by the hour; but I have no voice; and my piano-playing is very unsatisfactory to myself, and consequently to others also. My one talent is that of accompanist—at school I was always chosen for that."

"And, let me assure you," exclaimed Harry Lester, "that it is no ordinary accomplishment: a good accompanist should be able to put himself so thoroughly in harmony with the singer, as to merge the symphony with the voice—to echo, as it were, the sentiment of the words sung, in the notes of the instrument. See how selfish we all are! you could not possess a talent which would give me greater pleasure. My one extravagance this spring has been to have a piano brought over from Naples; but I am so clumsy in my efforts to make use of it, that I

shut it up in disgust a week ago. Promise me that you will come this evening and try over my songs? Do not shake your head, I assure you there would not be the slightest shade of impropriety in it; the *canonico*, who is really fond of music, often spends the evening with me, and his niece can as well bring her knitting to the studio, as to work in the living room. What! another shake of the head?"

But the second shake of the head was so much less energetic than the first, that Mr. Lester did not despair, and pleaded his cause so well, that before beginning the ascent towards the town, she had consented.

In after-days Louie always remembered this evening with singular vividness.

Mr. Lester's studio was a large, handsome room, with a high vaulted ceiling and some quaint furniture. On the door a former occupant, a French artist well known for the great delicacy and poetry of his works, had painted a graceful, winged female figure, holding a crown in one hand, while with the other she lifted a knocker. Louie, as she glanced at it, fancied it was the spirit of happiness seeking admission.

At first she was a little embarrassed and silent, not a little frightened, too, at having

music placed before her which she was expected to play at sight ; but soon she forgot all else in the delight of Harry Lester's singing.

The *canonico*, on his side, was in his element. To do honour to the occasion, he had put on his priest's cassock. He discoursed with much dignity of tone and great raciness of expression, seeming quite at his ease whatever might be the subject discussed. He paid stately compliments to the two performers, which his niece dutifully echoed ; but, according to his idea, the crowning moment of the evening was when he brought in a bottle of his choicest white wine and, with much ceremony, handed it round.

"It is excellent !" exclaimed Harry, holding out his glass so as to let the light fall on it ; then, as the *canonico* was about to give a detailed account of the manner in which it was made, he added, hastily, "to your health, Signor *Canonico*."

"To yours, rather," answered the priest, with an old-fashioned bow, "since it is you yourself whom the wine is about to strengthen and gladden," and he watched the liquid disappear with affectionate tenderness. "But the Signorina does not drink !" he observed, with jealous concern.

The Signorina indeed had put down her glass—to her unaccustomed palate the full flavour of the grape, which certainly was preserved to a remarkable degree in this wine, was rather disagreeable than otherwise; but she saw that from that moment the *canonico's* respect for her decreased sensibly.

"One cannot expect women to understand the merits of a wine like this," he remarked; "it is above their comprehension."

Louie meekly submitted to this severe sentence.

At exactly ten o'clock the worthy priest took out a plethoric silver watch—which was known to all the villagers as the "infallibile"—and rose. Upon this, Carmella quickly put up her knitting, well pleased to do so, for she was drowsy, this being for her a very late hour. Louie, of course, instantly left the piano.

"One moment," pleaded Harry, to whom this had been an evening of real delight; without waiting for permission, he placed himself at the instrument, and said, "this is a particular favourite of mine, it was composed by a very clever young fellow whose name will yet be known to the world. Listen particularly to the words—they are among the most charming that Alfred de Musset ever wrote!"

It was very evident that, in fact, this was a favourite song, for he sang it with a fire which thrilled one, at least, among his hearers :—

“ Si je vous disais pourtant que je vous aime,
Qui sait, brune aux yeux bleus, ce que vous en diriez ?
L'amour, vous le savez, cause une peine extrême ;
C'est un mal sans pitié, que vous plaiguez vous-même,
Peut-être cependant que vous m'en puniriez ;—

“ Si je vous le disais, que j'emporte dans l'âme,
Jusqu'aux moindres mots de nos propos du soir.
Un regard offensé, vous le savez, Madame,
Change deux yeux d'azur en deux éclairs de flamme—
Vous me défendriez peut-être de vous voir ;—

“ Mais vous n'en saurez rien. Je viens sans en rien dire
M'asseoir sous votre lampe, et causer avec vous ;
Votre voix, je l'entends ; votre air, je le respire ;
Et vous pouvez douter, deviner, et sourire,
Vos yeux ne verront pas de quoi m'être moins doux.

“ J'aime, et je sais répondre avec indifférence ;
J'aime, et rien ne le dit ; j'aime, et seul je le sais,—
Et mon secret m'est cher, et chère ma souffrance,
Et j'ai fait le serment d'aimer sans espérance,
Mais non sans bonheur—je vous vois, c'est assez !

“ Non, je n'étais pas né pour ce bonheur suprême
De mourir dans vos bras et de vivre à vos pieds ;
Tout me le dit, hélas ! jusqu'à ma douleur même—
Si je vous le disais pourtant, que je vous aime,
Qui sait, brune aux yeux bleus, ce que vous en diriez ?”

“ Yes,” observed the *canonico*, “ that is not

bad; though it is a pity you should not sing Italian—which in itself is music—rather than those French things, one might then understand what it was all about; though,” added he, with a twinkle in his dark eyes—“though even a poor priest who understands no language save his own is not quite so much in the dark as one might suppose. Eyes speak, my young friend—eyes speak as well as the tongue!”

When Louie was up in her lonely tower-room she sat by the open window, looking out at the stars, reading in them things of which, till now, she had but vaguely dreamt. The world beneath her slept; but her spirit would not be soothed to rest. When at last, worn with the strange delight of this new emotion, she lay down to sleep, her senses were gradually lulled into quiet by the constant repetition of these words:—

“Si je vous disais pourtant que je vous aime!”

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW WILD FLOWERS.

THE next morning, an ill-defined feeling of uneasiness succeeded to the excitement which the events of the previous day had engendered in Louie's mind. She asked herself if she had done any thing wrong, wondering how she could have acted differently or more wisely. She had, perhaps, been too passive; the pleasure of this young man's delightful companionship she had not sought, but neither had she rejected it; and now that the remembrance of his magnificent voice, of his looks, of his slightest words, filled her with a joy which she dared not analyze, she asked herself whether she ought not to have rejected it. She stood some time, her paint-box and pencils in her hand, deliberating whether she should go down to the garden, which, as he had said, was "common ground;"

finally, looking at her unfinished sketch, and calling to mind the advice and useful hints which he had given her about it, she concluded that it would be a pity not to profit by these, while they were still fresh in her mind. Miss Farland might have spared herself the trouble of all this elaborate reasoning, for, with it or without it, she was pretty sure to arrive at the same conclusion. On her way to the garden she glanced up shyly at the large studio window, but it was closed, probably for a peculiar arrangement of light and shade, and no sound reached her ear. As she worked on, the profound discouragement which had seized her the afternoon before disappeared, and she began to foresee that, with perseverance and energy, she might attain the end which she had proposed to herself. But no practical and well-defined plans for the future now filled her mind; the vision of a tiny, solitary cottage no longer haunted her as a rosy day-dream. It now struck her, for the first time, that such isolation at her age would be hard to bear, and attended, also, with many drawbacks. Why should she, after all, trouble herself about the future, that undeveloped mystery which, in time, would be unfolded without her agency? The present was

bright and sunny—let that suffice; and then this quiet English girl allowed her fancy to wander whither it pleased. These dreams of hers brought with them happiness, the intensity of which girls brought up under ordinary auspices could scarcely understand.

The hours went by; her work progressed, but gradually the bright look faded somewhat from her face. During all that long time she saw neither the *canonico* nor his niece, nor, indeed, any one except the servant, whose broad Capri dialect she could not understand. The studio window remained closed, and an oppressive silence reigned in and about the house. Insensibly her spirits fell, and yesterday seemed months ago. The rose which—singular innovation!—she had that morning placed in her hair faded and closed its withering leaves; and the colour in her face faded also, and left her paler even than usual. Suddenly she raised her head; she heard steps advancing. Looking round, she, with a pang of keen disappointment, recognized Carmella, who was carrying her little girl in her arms.

“Ah, Signorina *mia*, I have had no time to see after you to-day! Was your dinner to your taste? That is a particular way of cooking

macaroni of which my good uncle is very fond. But then the *forestieri* have not always our tastes. Did you observe I was careful that no garlic, or even onions, should be put in the dishes? Oh, *Mamma mia*, what a night! what a night! and coming, too, after such an exciting evening. How ill he was, to be sure!"

"The *canonico* is ill?" inquired Louie, whose mind was slightly bewildered between the macaroni, the garlic, and this unexpected news of illness.

"My uncle? No; he is never ill, the saints be praised! Oh, no! it is the *Inglese*, the young painter who sings so well, and whose name I never remember. *Dio mio!* but he was ill; the fever was so high that we had to call the doctor from his bed; but it is nothing, it seems—a violent attack which, however, will not last long. He will be about again in a week or so, no doubt. But how pale you are! You will be wanting the doctor too, if we do not take care. Are you quite sure the macaroni seasoned in that way has not disagreed with you?"

Carmella continued discoursing in this strain for some time longer, but Louie did not notice the question; she had heard enough. It was a relief when Carmella was called away for the performance of some household duty.

So that was the reason of the oppressive silence and of the closed studio window ; he had been ill, suffering, even while she had been indulging in foolish, rosy dreams ! She realized now how, during the hours of that long day, she had waited, watched, and hoped, craving his companionship, longing for the easy interchange of thought, the feast of sweet sounds, which had made the day before, an era in her life. Now all was changed ; her paint-brush dropped from her fingers, and her sketch looked blurred and indistinct, for she saw it through a mist of tears. Then she began seriously to take herself to task. It was not possible, it was not credible, that the chance acquaintance of a young man, of whom she knew almost nothing, should have become so all-important to her that without it the sun should lose its brilliancy, nature its beauty, life its meaning ! Yet so it was. That mystery which from the very beginning of the world has perplexed wise men, been scoffed at by cynics, and under whose tyranny all, even the scoffers themselves, have bowed, was once more being enacted in the heart of this lonely girl.

During the long days that followed Louie went on quietly with her work ; she allowed herself no hours of idleness. A great part of her time was spent far from the house sketching

from nature in wild secluded places, selected by her faithful Marianina. The season was not so advanced but that outdoor sketching was delightful, and many a sweet, soft morning was spent in this way. It was a relief to turn from tormenting thoughts of the sick-room, where Harry was suffering from an attack of lung fever, and where he was as completely beyond her reach as though he had left Capri, to the totally different phase of life which, through Marianina's chatter, she was enabled to glance at—a life in which the harshest details of the struggle for daily bread, are softened by a kind of simple and rough poetry, which seems the natural result of this sweet Italian clime.

One day Marianina received a letter from her far-away husband. She carried it about with her like a talisman. It is true, she could not even read it, but she had learned by heart the words of affection, which were intermingled with crudely practical reflections on the best means of scraping money enough together for their support during the bad season, when strangers should become scarce.

"When will he come back?" asked Louie, after they had discussed the letter and its contents.

“Not before the first storms at the end of September. It is long to wait, is it not? especially when one thinks what a life his is out there; they work so very hard, often all through the night; then the food is not good, and, after all, there is so little money earned! Besides, it worries him to know how I manage to earn the five or six *soldi* a day which are necessary for the support of my baby and me. You see, he could only leave me a few *lire* when he left; and before you came, on days when my donkey was not called for, I had to find what work I could. Often and often I have carried heavy stones on my head from the sea-shore to where they are building up in the town; and, do you know, Signorina, how much they give me for all that fatigue?—just two *soldi* a journey; and to think that one needs clothes as well as food! Think if I were to fall ill, what would become of my baby? but, *Mamma mia!* if one were to ponder over the sad things of this life one would never laugh or dance, and then what a dreadful place the world would be! We are all very poor, but we are merry too; all over the country one hears the laugh of young girls, and the cheerful talk of the women, as they carry heavy burdens on their heads up and down the steep path.”

As Louie listened to these details of a life so full of privations, and to which even the future, even old age would probably bring no softening—as she looked at the young peasant's bright face and dancing eyes she wondered at her own ingratitude, at her frequent repinings. On several occasions she had heard of acts of brutality which, even in these favoured climes, make poverty so repulsive, and she felt curious to know whether sunny-tempered Marianina had ever suffered from it.

“Have I ever been beaten?” said she, interpreting in its literal sense a question which Louie had put with greater delicacy. “*Dio mio!* yes, many a time. You see, Signorina, my mother was left a widow, so she had to work early and late to give us all even one full meal a day. Ah, life was hard in those days! Naturally, this made her unhappy; and, after all, unhappiness must find a vent, and so we children got many a beating. One day, for example, I had taken some strangers to the Castle of Tiberio, and beside my pay they gave me four *soldi*—ah, how happy I felt with my four *soldi!* It was the season of fruit, and I longed for some figs; so, instead of giving all my money to my mother, I kept back two *soldi*

and gave myself a feast. Oh, how I enjoyed it!—though it was at a time when poverty was hardest with us, and a little brother was down with fever. Unluckily, my mother saw me eating my fruit, and she was so angry that she threw a piece of wood at me violently; it hit me in the face, and for a week they thought I should lose my right eye.”

“Oh, how brutal!” exclaimed Louie, indignantly.

“Ah, Signorina,” answered Marianina, deprecatingly, as though sorry that her love of gossip should have betrayed her into revealing more of the home secrets than was perhaps advisable, “it was not my mother herself who did it—at least, she did not mean to hurt me really; but it was misery, it was dreadful poverty, which gave such force to the blow.”

“Still,” observed Louie after a pause, during which she pondered over this little touch of generous delicacy, “I should not think your lover would have been satisfied with this explanation.”

“Ah, you should have seen my Giovanni!” and Marianina’s beautiful eyes softened into tenderness at the remembrance. “*Dio*, how the tears would come, and how he brushed

them away, because a man may not cry ! He kissed the ugly wound, and I know that kiss saved the eye ! then he vowed he would marry me the coming winter, though we were both so young and so poor. Ah !” she added, drawing herself up, “ my husband has never raised his hand against me, and that is more than most married women about here could say. I am sure if he ever felt tempted to strike me, the remembrance of that swollen eye would stop him. So you see, after all, perhaps that was a very lucky blow !” and Marianina laughed merrily. After a rather long pause, during which Louie worked industriously, she continued, “ Shall I tell you a story of the Marina, Signorina ? ”

“ Certainly ; ” and Louie smiled to think how little this child of the South possessed the talent of silence.

“ It was before my time ; it was when my eldest sister, who has now six children, was a young girl ; she had an intimate friend who was called Linsella. They say that at sixteen Linsella was so beautiful that the sun never saw a lovelier face ; strangers would stop to look at her, and all the painters were wild to have her as a model ; but she always refused to sit,

because her *sposo* was very jealous by nature. He was handsome, too—a great tall fellow with big black eyes and much beard; they had been affianced ever since she was thirteen—we all take a *sposo* when we are very young—and she never dared let the other young men make her compliments because of Giuseppi's jealousy. But one day—it was a *festa*, and all the girls and youths met to dance on a large terrace; among the men was one who had come over from Sorrento just for a few days; he was rich and good-looking, and they say he could scarcely take his eyes off Linsella, who looked more beautiful than ever while dancing. It is the custom of the country, when a young man wishes to take a girl as his *sposo*, to send her a handkerchief full of *confetti*; if she accepts the gift they are considered as affianced, if, on the contrary, she sends it back, then he knows himself to be rejected. Well, the young stranger, who had plenty of money in his pockets, bought the best *confetti* to be had, put them in a bright yellow handkerchief, and sent them during the dance to Linsella. You must know that she had noticed the young fellow's admiration, and it did not displease her—we are all a little like that, are we not, Signorina?

—and when she peeped at the *confetti*, the finest she had ever seen, she sighed to think that she might not accept them. But she shook her head, and sent word that having already a *sposo*, she could not take another; before she let the handkerchief go, however, she slipped her hand in and drew out a dozen or so of the *confetti* just as a taste, thinking that they would never be missed. Then, to console the good-looking stranger, she danced with him oftener than with the others; she did not know that Giuseppi from a dark corner had seen all this. The next day when she went to the fountain for water, he sprang from behind a wall and stabbed her three times with a knife.”

“Horrible!” exclaimed Louie, to whom this mode of making love seemed rather startling.

“Yes,” composedly went on the little narrator, “it was pretty bad. He was put into prison for three years, and she came near dying of her wounds.”

“What became of them in the end? I hope she married the young man from Sorrento.”

“No, indeed, she did not! When Giuseppi came out of prison, after his three years, he

found that Linsella had remained unmarried for his sake."

"But, surely, she did not take him after all?"

"Oh, yes, she did; she told her friends that she was certain he loved her passionately, since he had nearly killed her. They live up at Anacapri, and he is the best husband of the village, they say; it is true, he beats her sometimes—still out of jealousy; but she takes it as a proof of his love;—after all, you know, some women have such odd ideas!"

"So it seems," observed Louie, dryly. While listening to this characteristic Italian love-story, she had left her work, to gather some of the beautiful wild flowers which at that season are so plentiful and so peculiarly lovely at Capri. She did not bind them into bouquets, but laid them daintily and with charming disorder in a pretty, tiny basket which she had brought for the purpose.

"The Signorina is fond of flowers?"

"Yes," was the laconic answer.

A little later Carmella carried the tiny basket into the sick-room. After five days of passive obedience to conventionalities which forbade her, she thought, to show by word or sign the interest she felt in the invalid, Louie rebelled,

and her rebellion found vent in the sweet breath of the wild flowers.

The time which Louie had found so long had seemed still longer to Harry Lester. Impatient of illness, yet too weak to resist the doctor's orders and leave his room, he employed the weary time in comparing his present loneliness with those well-filled hours which had sufficed to change a slight acquaintance into a warm, sympathetic friendship. Perhaps nothing could so effectually have deepened the feelings with which Louie had inspired this young man; he delighted in comparing her as he had first seen her, when, lost among the rocks, she had acknowledged his civilities with a bow, cold and constrained, such as became Lady Thurlow's companion, with her transformed self as she sat at the piano, trying over his accompaniments, and adapting her playing to his voice, with quick appreciation and intelligence, and looking up from time to time so as to ascertain by the expression of his eyes whether she was indeed satisfying him. All this was very pleasant and gratifying to his man's vanity; but the unbroken silence which she had maintained since that evening, the apparent indifference with which she regarded his illness, was considerably less gratifying.

“Those English girls,” thought he, when he had given up all expectation of some sign of interest from her, “have ice in their veins. A man uses all the warmth, all the fire of his own nature to thaw down some of the outworks industriously raised up by cold propriety and remorseless conventionality, and if he is forced to suspend his efforts for ever so short a time, lo ! the breach is carefully rebuilt, and he has to begin again. I, for one, shall give myself no further trouble, as to that I have quite made up my mind.—Will this day never come to an end ? Well, I will try what a cigar can do for me !”

The cigar was scarcely between his lips, its magic had only just begun to soothe the irritability and nervous ill-humour of the smoker, when Carmella unceremoniously entered the studio, which also served as sick-room.

“Ah, *caro* Signore ! look at them, if they are not pretty ! One sees them growing at one’s feet without thinking them worth the picking ; but the Signorina, with her clever fingers, has made them look quite lovely—and what a basket ! surely she did not find such an one at Capri—perhaps it came from Paris ; they say all dainty things do !”

“What are you talking about, my good

nurse? You have a way of running from one subject to another which is very bewildering to the masculine mind. Did the Signorina tell you to bring me these flowers?"

"That she did! I asked her whether she wished to send any message to you; but she said, 'No,' and turned away quickly. They had such odd, silent ways, those English, have they not? I can say so to you, Signore, because you seem more like one of us; do you understand? And now I must go, *presto, presto*, for my uncle will be wanting his supper;" and out flew busy Carmella.

Harry, with an affectation of stoicism, went on smoking his cigar; but he kept his eyes fixed on the dainty flowers, seeming to find in each an emblem of some peculiar trait of the girl who had picked them. There was much that was really artistic in the apparent carelessness of their arrangement; this Harry appreciated, but what he pondered on most willingly was her silent, shy way of sending them; after all, what need of message? "No," thought he, "no, decidedly she is not cold. What a pity that the sweetest flowers fate scatters at our feet should fade so quickly! These, however, shall never fade!" he added, with sudden energy,

and, gathering his materials about him, he began a rapid water-colour drawing of them. When his task was done he sank back tired but well pleased, all the inclination to misanthropical musing which he had evinced some hours before entirely gone.

Before sleeping that night he took up the tiny basket with tender care, sprinkled water on the flowers, and placed them at the window. "I wonder," thought he, "whether any action of mine has any real value, or even any real meaning? I think not. After all, a man is pretty much what circumstances make him: a highway robber and murderer of talent, placed in a higher sphere, might be a world-renowned conqueror—only the difference of circumstances makes that, in one case, he is hanged if caught, instead of figuring in the pages of history, and being made into a hero for the admiration of coming generations. I suppose Crittenden would have sneered mercilessly at my care of those flowers—but there, he is a materialist."

When at last Harry Lester was strong enough to go down into the garden, the meeting between the two young people was very quiet. Louie was silent and reserved, and Harry respected that reserve, and liked her none the

less for it. . The truth is that she had reasoned herself into a determination to instil as much prudent coldness into her manner as she possibly could. Yet how glad she was to see him again ! how fast her heart beat when she heard his weakened tread on the garden-walk ! and what true womanly sympathy and pity suffused her eyes when she noted how much this short, sharp illness had changed him ! But her first words were such as the merest acquaintance might have used ; and, before long, the commonplace remarks of both subsided in complete silence. Finally, Harry said,—

“Do you know, Miss Farland, that I was accusing you of total forgetfulness, when your pretty flowers came as a sweet reproach for my rash judgment ? They withered long ago ; but I shall carry with me always a drawing I made of them. When you see it, you will confess that it has been done *con amore* ;” then, after a pause, he added, “May I not see what progress you have made during all these long days ? I know that you have been working most industriously,” and soon both were deep in artistic discussions.

This put Louie quite at her ease, for when Harry Lester sat with one of her sketches

before him, giving her advice, praising this, blaming that, he was so thoroughly the artist, so entirely the master, that she had room for no other feeling than that of grateful attention.

Very quietly the soft, sunshiny weeks passed by. Spring melted into summer. The change of season, however, brought but little change to our two young people. Harry soon recovered his strength; he worked steadily, cheered and urged by the influence of his young friend; in return he assisted Louie's studies so effectually that her progress was rapid. The gravity and quiet which she knew how to introduce into the unusual position in which she found herself would have astonished any chance observer—it astonished Harry himself, but it inspired him with such respect for her character that he submitted to her influence with a kind of surprised pleasure. Circumstances somewhat aided Louie: for a considerable time there was no repetition of that first musical evening—singing was forbidden to Mr. Lester until his chest should entirely have recovered from the severe cold which had attacked it, and so the charm of his marvellous voice was not brought to bear against her. Still scarcely a day passed without bringing the two together;

it could not well have been otherwise; and little by little, in the midst of the quiet of this intercourse, a great intimacy of thought arose between them: their tastes accorded so well, their aims, to some extent, were identical, and both were deprived of those intimate family affections which, when they are wanting to a sensitive heart, leave it very empty. Did either reason as to the result which must sooner or later follow upon this sympathy of thought and feeling? More or less, doubtless; but, on his side, Harry Lester was too well satisfied with the present to trouble himself seriously about the future. Louie also wilfully shut her eyes; she even succeeded in half-persuading herself that the friendship she felt for this young man was of so platonic a character that she would be able to give it up with the rest of her holiday's pleasures—regretfully certainly, but with that sort of regret which brings rather a feeling of soft melancholy than one of acute anguish. This convenient self-delusion, however, was more than once shaken by the openly-expressed opinions of those about her. Marianina, who made a third in nearly all the excursions about the island, of course, in her simple way, looked upon the two as lovers.

The complications of such a case were completely beyond her comprehension. According to her, Louie had found her *sposo* at the grotto, and a wedding was to be the natural and inevitable result; but, with a delicacy very beautiful in this untaught peasant, she avoided all allusions to this undoubted fact as soon as she discovered that such allusions were distasteful to her "Signorina." But all had not Marianina's tact, and Carmella, for instance, could not be made to understand that gossip or jokes even, on such a subject, might be disagreeable to a young woman.

CHAPTER IX.

A CLOUD NO BIGGER THAN A MAN'S HAND.

THE Faraglioni are large, bold rocks which rise abruptly from the water, just under the point known as the "Tragara." At Tragara there has been built a platform, with stone seats surrounding it—the only luxury of the sort in the island; and as from the village to this point is comparatively level ground, it forms the one easy walk of the place, and is consequently, on Sundays or *fête* days, much frequented. To scramble down from this height, however, to the rocks below is no easy matter, for the tiny path which leads down is very steep and stony, so that the adventurous few who attempt the descent, when they have reached their destination, enjoy a delightful solitude.

From this place Mr. Lester commenced a

picture of the sea-coast and rocks, getting in the distance a glimpse of the Piccola Marina with the jutting Rocca delle Sirene, of which he had spoken to Louie when discoursing upon the legendary history of the island. He had persuaded her to attempt a sketch of the same view.

One especial afternoon both were working assiduously, and Marianina, leaning against a rock, was serving as model for a foreground figure, when Harry, breaking a silence which had lasted some time, exclaimed,—

“Have you ever reflected, Miss Louie”—he had changed the formal “Miss Farland” for “Miss Louie” soon after his recovery—“that there is something very original and romantic in our life here at Capri?”

Louie had thought of this often; but it did not enter into her plan of action to allow this originality and romance to be dwelt upon too earnestly; so in her answer she adopted a little playful manner which had become habitual to her whenever she wished to parry her companion's occasional attempts at sentiment.

“Of course there is! Can you not imagine, in poem or story, a highly-flavoured description of the lonely maiden pensively riding on—a

donkey ! it is a repetition, as it were, of Una and the lion, do you not think so ?" and both laughed.

"Do not speak disrespectfully of my good friend Biancarella, for whenever I catch a glimpse of her long iron-grey ears, a feeling of pleasant expectancy comes over me, for I know that a moment later I shall see you."

"Really, the association of ideas is delightful !"

"I see you will not be serious, nor allow me to be so. Do you not feel the influence of this delicious hour ?"

"Yes ; but what I feel most of all is, that a sea-breeze has sprung up since the sun has been going down so fast, and that reminds me to be prudent—Marianina, hand me my little shawl." Then she chatted some time with her faithful attendant, seeing which Harry Lester resumed his painting with a smile and a shrug. These weeks of quiet happiness had brought a great change to Louie ; though at times still a little shy and reserved, there was usually a bright, happy expression on her face, and her talk was often intermingled with silvery laughter very pleasant to hear. Her extreme pallor had now given way to a more healthy tinge, and her

slight figure assumed more rounded proportions. Lady Thurlow, had she come back to life, would scarcely have recognized her companion. When Marianina had returned to her duty as model, Harry remarked,—

“I scarcely know why, but I always associate you with this the sweetest of all the twenty-four hours; as the sky begins to glow with sunset tints, it reminds me of your face when a beautiful or tender thought gives a transient colour to it. It was toward sunset that I first saw you.”

“I remember. I had just torn my dress on a sharp rock, and was sadly ruminating on the long darn which I should have to make. By the way, I ought not to feel flattered that you should associate me always with sunsets; it would be more gallant to think of me in connexion with the morning of life, rather than with its evening.”

Harry smiled, and shook his head.

“Perhaps it is because in your very gaiety there is nearly always an under-tone of sadness, that I never could so associate you: you are like a piece of music written in a minor key, which, though it may for a time break out in a bright succession of major chords, sinks back

almost immediately into the soft, tender, and mournful dominant. No, I could never think of you in connexion with a fresh, bright morning: besides, a soft evening, to my mind, is always more beautiful. There is something in the gradual dissolving of the rich glow into the grey colours of night which speaks to my very soul."

"Why should you connect sad images with me?" exclaimed Louie, distressed, and leaving aside her bantering manner; "why should I not be capable of continued happiness as well as others? Until this summer, I was indeed cold and sad; but it was the result of circumstances, not of nature. At last, I have found liberty, and I enjoy it so that it has quite changed me."

"Indeed it has," answered the young man, with marked emphasis. "But the summer is advancing; the holiday, which, as you once told me, was not to last more than three months, is gradually melting away. But I dread to think of your possible departure—what need, after all, have you to go home?"

"Home!" echoed Louie, the old grey look of care, which had so long been banished from her face, returning to it; "I do not know the meaning of the word—I never had a home!"

"Forgive me," and Harry's voice sounded very gentle; "I did not mean to distress you; I used the word in a general sense, as we who are abroad are apt to do—I simply meant England. But you are right, there is a bitterness in that sweet word to those who practically do not understand its meaning. I, like you, have no home; yet, with me, there are vague memories of childhood—memories connected with my mother, my gentle, lovely mother, who even in the midst of poverty and privations was always so entirely a lady! A home!—but can you imagine, Miss Louie, that there might be that intimate charm which we connect with the word in a home where the elegancies and comforts, which, to my mind, form the poetry of practical life, are wanting? Do you fancy that a home, poor and common-place, might still be the Paradise on earth which one loves to dream about?"

"Yes," said Louie, simply.

"I wish I could think so too!" Then, after a pause, he continued, "I once, as a boy, knew a man who in the midst of a struggling existence had known how to found such a Paradise. He was a literary man of real abilities, yet whose talent was of a kind which the public is

slow to appreciate. He had married young, and found no small difficulty in maintaining his family; yet that man's home was a haven of rest; when once he crossed the threshold he left worldly cares behind him. Then he was a religious man, and believed with simple faith that, as long as he did his duty, help would not be wanting to him in the hour of need. His house was a mere cottage, and the furniture was plain and old; yet, as I speak, the image of cosy comfort and happiness which the fire-lit sitting-room presented rises before me; it impressed me strongly as a boy, it astonishes me as a man. I still remember the placid content of the mother as she glanced at the group of children gathered about the fire; they were fine, well-grown, intelligent boys and girls, brought up with the knowledge that they would have to fight their own way in the world, and taught to face the future with simple courage. In time they fought that battle well, and made the old age of father and mother easy and pleasant. But then, that man's wife was such a woman as is met with once in a hundred years,—strong, loving, full of courage, full of common sense, too, and possessing the admirable talent of making the hard things of this life seem

almost beautiful. I have an odd fancy that when she was young she must have looked like you. You see I can admire such a life, even though I know that in my case it would be an impossibility."

"Why should it be an impossibility?"—the question arose to Louie's lips, and was uttered, before she could check herself.

"Because, Miss Louie, my life so far has made me unworthy of simple happiness. Yet," he added, softly, "if it should ever be my good fortune to win the love of a woman strong and gentle, like the wife of my old friend, even I might learn the sweet significance of a love-hallowed home, where poverty should become blessed, because shared by a beloved and pure-natured wife!" Harry Lester leaned his head on his hands, and as he did so the last rays of the sun played with the golden shadows of his hair. Louie was deeply moved, and it was some minutes before she recovered her usual self-possession; then she said, quietly enough,—

"It is getting late; let us go."

They began the ascent in silence. The path was very steep, and even in some places dangerous, therefore it was but natural that Mr. Lester should help his young companion, and that she

should allow herself to be so helped. Once she slipped on a rolling stone, and would have fallen, but that he caught her in his arms; her heart beat violently—not entirely from fright at the danger she had run—and for a moment or two she could scarcely stand. It was with a more lover-like intonation than he had ever used before that Harry said,—

“Lean on me; it is sweet to feel your slight weight.” Then, when they had reached the Tragara platform, and stood watching the moon slowly rising from behind the high rock, he asked, “May I not sing to you this evening? It is so long since we have had any music, and my chest is now as strong as it ever was. The *canonico* was asking me to-day to induce you to come down and accompany me; think of it! he may reward you for your condescension with a glass of his dearly cherished wine! But, seriously, you will allow yourself to be persuaded, will you not?”

And Louie allowed herself to be persuaded. She longed to hear once more his matchless voice; yet, thinking of that evening nearly six weeks back, she almost dreaded its influence.

As the little party neared the village the *canonico* accosted Mr. Lester.

"I am glad to meet you, my *biondo* Signore, for the postman has just given me a letter for you. Here it is," and, with a comprehensive bow, the little priest, who was in all the dignity of his out-door dress, went on his way, his walking-stick under his arm and his shovel-hat pushed back so as to allow the evening air to cool his heated brow.

"A letter for me?" ruminated Harry; "that is an event, to be sure! Two or three persons only know of my whereabouts, for, with my virtuous resolution of steady work strong upon me, I left as little trace of myself as possible.—Just stop one moment, will you, Miss Louie, while I strike a match and see who my correspondent may be?"

Louie complied, and amused herself with watching the effect of the lighted wax-taper on his face as he looked at his letter. She was idly speculating as to whether the strong light, contrasting with the dark shadows around, was becoming or not, when she was startled by an exclamation.

"What is it?" she asked, with ill-defined apprehension.

"Have I ever spoken to you of my great friend Carryl Crittenden?"

"I think not."

"Is it possible? Well, to own the truth, when I am with you I try to forget all the circumstances of my past life. This seems to me an enchanted island, of which you are the queen, and I fear to break the spell by allusions to another and a far worse state of existence. But now it is inevitable: Crittenden is my best friend, and this is his laconic missive:—

'DEAR HAL,—Find me some quarters somewhere; I am coming to join you. I am bored with all things; and I trust to you to drag me out of boredom. Expect me in a day or two.

'Yours,

'C. C.'

Such a fellow as he is! how glad I shall be to see him!"

"So," thought Louie, "the enchanted island with its queen does not, after all, suffice," and a slight sensation of cold made her shiver.

Harry did not notice this, but continued,—

"We have been friends for years—ever since I was a mere boy. He is a little older than I, and had advantages of fortune and position which I do not possess. Then he is the most fascinating fellow I ever met: fascinating to men, and still more so to women. Take care

of your heart, Miss Louie!" he added, with a lightness which instinctively displeased her. She remained silent. "You do not speak; why do you not congratulate me?"

"Because I do not see that it is a subject for congratulations."

"Why not? Have I not just told you that he is my dearest friend?"

"Yes; but I doubt whether he is your wisest friend."

"How can you tell that?"

"In the first place, you acknowledged to me, in one of our early conversations, that the great cause of your embarrassments was your fondness for society, and your success in it. Now, you tell me that this great friend of yours enjoys greater advantages of fortune and position than you, I conclude, therefore, that it was principally through him that you were led to waste your time and talents in a world which made a pet of you as long as you could minister to its pleasures, but which would not hold out a finger to further your real interests. Besides, the tone of that note displeases me."

"Oh! that is merely his way of talking; it is the tone of those with whom he lives, and he sometimes adopts it. You are sure to like

him ; I never knew a man with such charm of manner."

Louie did not answer ; a numb jealousy—foolish and unreasonable, perhaps—had taken possession of her heart. It seemed to her that Harry's manner had completely changed since the reception of that note ; that the very tone of his voice was different—colder and less sympathetic.

In the evening they had music, and the *canonico* brought both his niece and his wine ; but, in spite of her efforts, Louie could not shake off her fit of depression. Her host, on the contrary, was in high spirits, and sang with even more than his usual brilliancy. Little by little she submitted to the influence of his voice ; but just as she had succeeded in banishing her unwelcome thoughts, he placed on the piano-desk a song, saying,—

"This is Crittenden's especial favourite, let us try it."

Louie glanced at it, then rose, saying, coldly,—

"The accompaniment is too difficult to play at sight—besides, I think it is getting late."

Harry looked at her in astonishment. This was, to him, a new phase of her character. The excuse was certainly not a valid one, for she had

played several accompaniments at sight that evening quite as difficult.

"All women are mysteries, even the best and most natural," ruminated he.

As he said good-night he looked so comically puzzled that she was forced to smile, and that smile, for the time being at least, cleared the atmosphere of its threatened storm.

CHAPTER X.

CARRYL CRITTENDEN.

FOR several days Louie heard but little of Mr. Crittenden. It so happened that during that time she saw Harry Lester less frequently than usual; he had models at his studio, and she, on her side, was attempting a rather more ambitious study than usual—it was a view from the Marina Grande.

One particular afternoon she had not long been settled at her work when, at a little distance, she saw two ladies in earnest conversation who from time to time glanced at her. She recognized in them the very two who had made the unsuccessful attempt to form Lady Thurlow's acquaintance. It distressed Louie to be reminded by seeing them of a time which she sought, as much as possible, to forget. Hitherto she had been singularly fortunate in avoiding

every thing like intercourse with the boarders of the hotel; now, however, she felt instinctively that she was the subject of the ladies' conversation, and that she was about to be accosted. For a moment she meditated escaping by flight, but this she soon realized would be useless; she became so nervous that she could scarcely guide her brush. Soon she felt, rather than saw, that the elder of the two, Mrs. Cardwell, was approaching her, while the other sauntered away. Mrs. Cardwell was a stout lady, with a comfortable sense of her own importance. This sense of importance was aided, perhaps, by the remembrance of the days when she had been called "a very fine person" and the knowledge that her widow's juncture was a handsome one. She was what is called a thoroughly good woman; very religious, very charitable—as far as alms-giving went—and very domineering. As she always had the conviction that her intentions were good, she would persevere in any line of conduct which she might adopt with unbending resolution, perfectly regardless of the feelings of others. She was, in fact, one of those excellent women who manage to do more harm in the world than many persons of far less moral elevation.

"Good afternoon, Miss Farland," she said, out of breath, and somewhat red in the face, for walking over the slippery stones of the beach is hard work when one is stout and nearly sixty. Louie simply bowed and went on painting. This reception might have discouraged another woman; it did not discourage Mrs. Cardwell. After a short interval, during which she struggled womanfully to regulate her breathing so as to be able to utter consecutive sentences, she said,—

"You are working seriously, I see. Do you mean to adopt painting as a profession?"

Louie glanced at the questioner with that look of cold surprise with which English people know so well how to receive a question which they consider impertinent; she, however, answered, quietly, "I do not know."

"Ah!" continued Mrs. Cardwell, quite undaunted, though inwardly chafing at the ex-companion's frigid manner, "you form no plans for the future, I see. You are wise, for the future is in the hands of the Lord. The present, however, is in our own hands, and we are responsible for the use which we make of it." Mrs. Cardwell paused solemnly; she had given to her voice a certain pulpit inflection peculiarly

distressing to sensitive nerves. "Miss Farland, are you sure that you are making a good use of that present? Do not answer me yet. Reflect before speaking. You are a young woman, and have scarcely enough experience, perhaps, to know how very—ahem!—how very singular your conduct appears in the eyes of the world. You should not have left the hotel, where the companionship of others of your sex would have given the sanction of respectability to your lonely and unprotected position. Instead of that you choose to live alone, and you are seen constantly running wild about the country in the company of a young man whom nobody knows!"

"Mrs. Cardwell," said Louie, rising, and drawing herself up to her full height, "I have listened to you so far out of respect for your age, and for the possible disinterestedness of your intentions; but I also owe respect to myself, and you will forgive me if I remind you that my conduct is a thing between my God and myself; a thing over which you, as an utter stranger, could not possibly have the slightest influence. As long as I possess the consciousness of doing nothing wrong, I am quite indifferent to the opinion of the world which, on this occa-

sion, you have lowered your dignity so far as to represent. Now you will excuse me if I tell you that, my time at Capri being limited, every moment becomes precious; I therefore beg your permission to resume my painting."

Mrs. Cardwell was, as we have seen, not easily disconcerted, but on this occasion she turned away abruptly, swelling with angry mortification and fully convinced that Louie was a young woman lost beyond redemption.

Notwithstanding the proud position she had taken, this incident affected Louie painfully; it showed her the bare facts of her position as seen and judged by others—not even Marianina's talk could make her smile. Tired, and dissatisfied with her day's work, she was just meditating putting up her paint-box when her attention was arrested by an unusual bustle about the landing-place. She soon understood that there was a new arrival, for she saw that all the women, girls, boys, and babies were crowding about the pier in the hope of getting a job or obtaining a *bajocco*. Presently she heard a clear, ringing voice say, very loud, and in tolerable Italian,—

"Look here, my good people, if you think I am going to allow myself to be pestered in this

way, you are mistaken. Listen ! I have a proposition to make. Swear by all your saints to leave me in peace on weekdays, and every Sunday I will cause five *lire* to be distributed among you ; but if you dare to break your part of the compact by so much as one infraction, you shall not get a penny out of me, and I will make friends with your syndic so as to have you all put in prison as vagabonds—do you hear ?”

The cheers which had threatened to interrupt the first part of the proposition were checked by the concluding sentence ; but the prospect of the five francs was so enchanting that the threat lost its terrors, and one voice crying out, “ *Evviva il milor Inglese !* ” others joined in the shout.

“ Good. Now let us begin from this moment. Stand back, every man, woman, and child of you ! I am so cramped with sitting in that confounded boat that I must walk off the stiffness, and if so much as a baby dares to molest me in my stroll, farewell to the five *lire*.”

Then the stranger, indolently leaning against a post, proceeded to light a cigar and to scan the beach and the beautiful expanse of water which he had just crossed. As he did so there was rather critical approval in his look than

enthusiasm. He was a very tall man; so well proportioned, however, that he carried his unusual height with perfect grace. He was dark; too dark, perhaps, for unless he smiled his face seemed, in consequence, to assume a sinister expression. He was not handsome in the strict meaning of the word, but there was a sense of power and strength in his appearance which was far superior to mere physical beauty. Looking at him, one was tempted to think that he had rejected perfect harmony of features out of contemptuous indifference. His hair was thin and left the temples exposed, but his beard was heavy and very black. He looked about thirty years of age.

Having smoked a few minutes, he left his place and walked down from the landing-pier on to the beach. Louie had followed all these movements with a sort of uneasy fascination; indeed, the appearance of the stranger disturbed her so much that the few last touches which she attempted almost spoiled her sketch. She knew instinctively that this tall dark man was Carryl Crittenden.

It was not long before the stranger noticed the quiet artist with her reclining attendant. He, however, passed by, apparently satisfied

with one quick glance. Louie gave a little sigh of relief, for it was no unusual thing for passers-by to stop and leisurely examine an artist's work. She was proceeding to put up her brushes when she heard the crunching of the gravel and stones behind her. The sound stopped, and she felt that the stranger was looking down at her and her work. She turned impulsively, with a look of fear in her eyes. The young man touched his hat, and said, in English,—

“I hope I am not disturbing you. I fancied that this kind of impertinence was a received thing abroad. I should say that your sketch was promising well, if the opinion of an ignoramus like myself was not perfectly worthless.”

“Please do not look at it, Mr. Crittenden; it is——” then Louie stopped abruptly; she saw the stranger give a surprised start, and she knew that she had called him by his name. She instantly realized the extreme awkwardness of her mistake and blushed deeply, while tears of mortification filled her eyes.

“I am greatly flattered that you should know my name! Have we met somewhere? but that is scarcely likely, for I should, I am sure, have remembered you.”

“Pardon me,” at last murmured poor Louie,

"I knew you from the description a mutual friend had given me of you, and by some inconceivable impulse the name which came to my mind came also to my lips."

"Why should you seem so distressed? it was the most natural thing in the world—allow me one question, however: was the friend who so obligingly introduced me to you Mr. Lester?"

"Yes," answered Louie, continuing the preparations for departure with such haste that no excuse for loitering was left to Mr. Crittenden; he smiled, and, lifting his hat, walked away. Louie could have cried with vexation. To have given a man whom she instinctively distrusted such an advantage during the first five minutes after his arrival—it was too bad!

Meanwhile Mr. Crittenden took the winding path, which in many places is almost a stairway, up to the village. This was not his first visit to the island, and he knew exactly where to find his friend's studio. "Ah!" ruminated he, "I thought there must be a woman in the case; otherwise Hal would not have kept his resolution of work and seclusion so long; he made a mistake when he tried to keep it a secret from me—he made a very great mistake."

Carryl Crittenden was called by his friends fortune's favourite; in other words, he was a man with whom most things succeeded; he was not exactly rich, but he possessed an income amply sufficient for his wants and fancies, and which he was too wise to squander in useless extravagances. When Harry Lester had declared that he was fascinating to men, and still more fascinating to women, he had but said the truth; yet few men exerted themselves less frequently to win admiration; he was indeed sometimes insolently indifferent in the midst of a society which sought and petted him. When, however, he set himself seriously to please it required unusual strength of character to resist him. When he first saw Harry Lester, who was then a mere lad, he was attracted by a freshness and sunniness in his nature; and the man of the world condescended to make some efforts to win the young fellow's affection: he succeeded so well that his influence over Harry became very powerful.

The meeting between the two friends was most cordial; after the first greetings had been exchanged, Mr. Crittenden stretched himself luxuriously in an armchair and said,—

“Well, runaway! let me see what use you

have been making of your time—you know I have no pretensions as art critic, still if I cannot judge of the quality, I can of the quantity."

Harry, not a little proud of his unusual industry, turned round several pictures, two of them quite, and the others almost, finished. One of these especially attracted Mr. Crittenden's attention; it was of a somewhat different character from the others, and represented a girl looking out upon the sea, following with her straining eyes a boat in which the figure of her lover was still visible; the grief of the girl seemed to have some horror and fear in it, as though the shadow of a crime had weighed on her separation from her lover—such, at least, was the impression produced by the little picture on Carryl Crittenden; but what struck him most was the resemblance of this girl to the young artist who had addressed him by his name. That resemblance would perhaps not have struck every body, for the features were in point of fact dissimilar, but there was something in the action of the slight figure, and in the expression of the face, which brought Louie forcibly to mind; only it was her expression intensified by a sorrow too deep for words. Harry Lester

became uneasy at this prolonged examination, and tried to attract his friend's notice to the other works; as he insisted, Mr. Crittenden quietly said,—

“I will look at the other things presently, my dear fellow; you ought to be flattered by the impression this picture makes on me, instead of looking so nervously uncomfortable. Were you afraid of making the likeness too apparent? or was it merely a wish to follow more exactly an artist's conventional ideas of plastic beauty? believe me, nature, as she is, is a better guide than some of you fellows seem to imagine.”

“What do you mean?” asked Harry, nearly losing his breath for very surprise.

“Nothing much; only I happened to see the original of this picture down at the Marina—I even had a short conversation with her. I approve your taste; she is no beauty, it is true, but there is something very charming about her face—especially when she blushes. Tears and blushes are becoming to only a favoured few of womankind; she belongs to those favoured few.”

CHAPTER XI.

LOUIE'S PRUDENCE.

THE more Louie reflected on her first interview with Mr. Crittenden the more distressed she felt. She had committed one of those foolish little awkward mistakes which remain with disagreeable vividness in the memory long after far more serious causes of unhappiness have been effaced by time. In the quiet of her tower chamber she exaggerated the possible consequences of her blunder until she made herself more than half ill; she had been, in spite of her prejudices against this man, much impressed by his unusual appearance—by his evident consciousness of strength, both physical and mental; she no longer wondered at the influence which he had acquired over his friend, and she instinctively feared that this same influence might, even against her will, be extended to herself.

Her one object now must be to avoid him as much as possible—only in avoiding him, she would also have to avoid Harry Lester! As she thought of this the jealous pang which she had felt when Harry received his friend's note returned with double force.

Louie's first opportunity of carrying her prudent resolves into execution occurred that very evening. After supper Carmella entered her room and hoped that the Signorina might be induced to go down-stairs, so that they might all enjoy a little music; but the Signorina could not be induced, pleading that excellent female excuse—a headache. Carmella retired after much expostulation; she shrewdly put no faith in this sudden indisposition.

"How provoking!" exclaimed Harry when this news was brought to him; "she seemed well enough this morning; it is your dark face that has frightened her, Carryl."

"Poor timid dove!" muttered Crittenden between two formidable puffs at his cigar.

"The fact is, you know, she had taken a remarkable dislike to you ever since I read your note to her."

"Delighted to hear it," answered Crittenden, stretching himself almost at full length on a

crazy bench, for they were both enjoying their cigars in the *canonico's* garden.

"Delighted?" questioned his friend.

"Of course. There is nothing which adds such zest to affairs of this sort as a little hearty dislike in the beginning."

Lester sprang to his feet, all the careless levity gone out of his manner.

"Crittenden, you must not——"

"I must not do what?"

"Flirt with her. Do you hear? you must not!"

"And why, pray?"

"Because she is not like other women."

"On the contrary, I think her a particularly good specimen of womankind, both as to good and bad qualities—'she is a woman, therefore, to be wooed; she is a woman, therefore, to be won.'" Then, after a pause, during which he watched his friend's agitation, he continued, in a different tone, "Come, come, Hal, this will never do! sit down here, and let us talk common sense. Yours is such an open nature that there is not the slightest merit in deciphering your thoughts and motives: from the moment I saw how anxious you were to turn my attention away from that little picture of yours, in

which I discovered a certain likeness which you, in your simplicity, thought invisible to any eyes but your own—from that moment I took in the whole case at a glance. This is not the first time that you have fancied yourself in love, nor will it be the last; but on this occasion there are more dangerous symptoms than usual: from the little I have seen of Miss Farland I am convinced that she is a woman with whom it would be natural to connect ideas of matrimony, conjugal bliss, home fireside, and all the rest of it.”

“Well, and where is the harm of this? it strikes me that it is more to her credit, and to mine, than if my love for her were not accompanied with such thoughts.”

“Very properly and morally put, Hal! Do not shrug your shoulders; I beg you to understand that I have the greatest respect for matrimonial bliss, theoretically speaking—practically, it is quite another thing. Hal, you know as well as I do, that you cannot marry—or, at least, that you cannot marry a girl who is as poor as yourself. This sounds very harsh and worldly to you, I see, and you are half inclined to quarrel with me, but still you know that it is perfectly true, and that with your pleasure-loving, self-indulgent nature marriage, even marriage with

a woman like this pale-faced paragon of yours, would bring inevitable misery on you, and consequently on her; therefore, to shield you from such a fate—I mean to make her fall in love with me!”

“Crittenden!” exclaimed Harry, almost beside himself, “you have been my model, my hero, and my attachment to you has never faltered; but I tell you frankly that if you throw your shadow over Louie Farland’s life, I——”

“You would provoke me to mortal combat! Very likely. It would not be the first time that a friendship, strong and sincere like ours, has been broken up by a woman’s glance of predilection. But we have not come to that yet; calm yourself and be so good as to answer me a question, one only.”

“What is it?”

“Have you asked her to be your wife, or even resolved seriously to ask her?”

“I—I have been so well contented with the present that——” answered Harry, reluctantly.

“That you have delayed forming any positive plans for the future—is that it?”

“Perhaps.”

“Very well; then you see you are not so very much in earnest after all; and between

your mode of action and the one I propose to myself I do not see any very great difference."

"Crittenden!"

"No more virtuous indignation, pray! it would be out of place. You have been making love to Miss Farland without any definite idea of marrying her; I mean to make love to her with a definite idea of not marrying her, that is the only difference. Now, you have an immense start on me, for she is, or fancies herself, in love with you—at least that is what I infer; if, notwithstanding this, she accepts my homage, she will prove herself unworthy of the more serious affection which you might feel tempted to offer her." Then there was a silence, and when Crittenden once more spoke he gave an intonation of gentleness to his voice which made of every word a caress: "I seem cruel to you, do I not? yet believe me, Hal, I would rather be cruel to myself—and never have I been more sincerely your friend than at this moment. What is this English girl to me, in comparison with you? I care for you too much to let you throw away all your chances of success in life on an impossible marriage."

"Carry!" exclaimed Harry, vehemently, "I do her a great injustice when I condescend to

fear for her—there is that in her nature which is strong enough to resist even your fascinations.”

“So much the better for her.”

“Promise that if I am right, that if, after a certain lapse of time, she does not turn from me, you will desist; you will leave us to work out our fate as best we can.”

“Very well; but, on your side, you must consent to let me have some opportunities of testing her strength of character.”

“Well, I consent,” reluctantly said Harry; and by mutual consent they changed the subject.

Louie held to her resolution of avoiding the two young men; she knew, of course, that this line of conduct could not long be continued, but she wanted at least to gain time—she wanted to recover from the shock of her first meeting with Mr. Crittenden. So she shut herself up in her room and, as a matter of course, found the time very heavy on her hands; still she persevered, much to Marianina's amazement and distress. Harry Lester chafed at this, yet argued from it that Louie's aversion to his friend had increased rather than abated in consequence of the meeting on the beach, and he no longer wished to combat that aversion.

Meanwhile Mr. Crittenden, by no means impatient, though perhaps a little surprised as day by day passed, employed his time in settling himself in his new quarters. He was a man who, though his manner, especially to his own sex, was studiously simple, was not fond of what is characteristically called "roughing it;" he never travelled without his servant, and an ill-cooked dinner distressed him. Still there was something he enjoyed even more than personal comforts; and that was the opportunity of studying the peculiarities of clever men. The charm of his manner served him in this too; it opened to him some of the most renowned studios of Paris, London, and Rome, and even—a rarer privilege—obtained for him a welcome to the libraries of various literary celebrities. At Capri, as Lady Thurlow to her disgust had discovered, artists abounded, among them there were several painters of high reputation, for the most part French; and at the inn where these resided Mr. Crittenden chose to take up his abode; he immediately became a prime favourite with all of them.

At last, on the afternoon of the fifth day after the interview at the Marina, the two young men met Louie, with Marianina, rambling among the

ruins of the Palazzo di Tiberio. Harry ran forward with an exclamation of delight, which brought a faint, trembling colour to Louie's face; he then introduced his friend, saying, carelessly enough,—

“I believe, though, that you have already met?”

“Yes,” answered Mr. Crittenden, with such unaffected ease of manner that it helped Louie to recover her self-possession, “I had the pleasure of glancing at a sketch which I am sure deserved more serious attention than I was allowed to bestow on it. Harry tells me that you are a serious art-student, Miss Farland; I, for my part, quite envy you; I know of nothing more delightful when travelling than to form a sort of diary of sketches. You have travelled a good deal, have you not?”

“No,” answered Louie; “that is,” she added, in a tone which showed that all reference to her past life was unpleasant to her, “I have passed rapidly through France, Switzerland, and Italy, but I did not make one sketch during those journeys; nor do I regret it, every thing which would tend to remind me of those days would be disagreeable to me.” So saying she turned as though intending to go.

"Please do not leave us, Miss Louie!" pleaded Harry; "think how long it is since I have seen you! Why did you shut yourself up so cruelly in your tower chamber?"

"I—I was not well," stammered Louie, "my head ached very badly."

"A doctor would tell you that fresh air was the best thing for a headache. Do stay a little longer, or I shall come to the conclusion that in some way or other I have offended you. Have I?" he added, eagerly, and in a low tone. "If I thought I had done any thing to account for those pale cheeks I should never forgive myself!"

Louie looked up quickly and saw that Mr. Crittenden had sauntered away with apparent indifference, and was examining a bit of ruin with a degree of attention which would have done credit to an archeologist.

"You have not offended me," she said, simply, giving him her hand, with an involuntary glance and blush which quite satisfied the young man.

"Then you will stay?"

"Yes, there is no reason why I should not."

At that moment Mr. Crittenden joined them and the conversation became general. Insensibly Louie yielded to the influence of the genial

talk, doubly delightful to her after her seclusion, and heartily admired with her companions the magnificent view Tiberius' palace, or, to give it its proper name, "La Villa di Giove" commands. The ruins cover a considerable extent of ground, but they have suffered so much from time, and especially from the various barbarous invasions which Capri from time to time endured, that it is difficult to imagine from the low, crumbling remnants of walls that this, in the time of the Cæsars, was one of the most luxurious palaces that tyrant ever built. All the magnificent edifices which, in the reign of Tiberius, made of this island a place of enchantments gradually fell into disuse after his death; but it was during the invasions of the Saracens, who from the ninth to the eleventh century kept the unfortunate inhabitants in constant fear, that these were almost completely destroyed. From its position, commanding as it does the two gulfs of Naples and Salerno, Capri has been from the earliest ages—when the Phœnician merchants found it a useful station—to this, our century, a place of considerable importance and a favourite spot for military operations. No island of its size has perhaps undergone so many vicissitudes of fortune: it has known the height of material

prosperity; it has been ornamented by all the luxury which the imagination of man could conceive and the wealth of despot put into execution; and it has known the miseries of war, of poverty, and also of a most devastating pestilence. It has passed from one domination to another: the Greeks, the Romans, the Saracens; then, later, the Spanish, the French, and the English have, one after the other, left the impress of their nationalities on this little spot. It is, however, the boast of the inhabitants that, through all these vicissitudes, they have retained more of the characteristics of their Greek forefathers than perhaps any of the other Greek colonies.

"Certainly," observed Mr. Crittenden, "those old Romans, if they had no other merit, knew at least how to choose capital spots for their palaces—how far one can see! but for that bend in the coast we should be able to distinguish both Amalfi and Salerno. And then how clear the water looks even from this immense height! what seem to us mere stones down in the blue depths, are, in reality, huge moss-covered rocks. Is it not from this point that Tiberius used to have his friends thrown, as an after-dinner amusement? I shall probably shock

you, Miss Farland, but I must confess that I have a certain respect for those old tyrants; they made the lives of those about them rather unpleasant, perhaps, but then they often showed very excellent taste, and they certainly knew how to make themselves devilishly comfortable."

Little by little Louie's shyness wore off; Mr. Crittenden was so unaffectedly unembarrassed, and seemed so completely to have forgotten the episode down at the Marina, that she also, for the time being, forgot it; besides, his manner was perfectly quiet, courteous, and gentleman-like. The tone of the stranger who had ordered the peasants from his presence and had, as it were, flung his promise of reward at them with such entire contempt—the manner also of the half-insolent loungeur who had looked at her sketch had completely disappeared; it was no wonder then that, as a reaction from her exaggerated fears, Louie should feel reassured. Yet all this time he was calculating with nice precision the amount of polite indifference necessary perfectly to quiet her apprehensions before giving full play to his more fascinating qualities.

At first, however, Louie preferred to listen rather than to talk much herself; she meanwhile amused herself with playing with her large

parasol, which also served the purpose of walking-stick ; while so doing, by an abrupt movement, as unexpected to herself as to her companions, she hit a projecting bit of the ruined wall with such force that all three were instantly covered with a shower of dust and clods of earth more or less large. No amount of prudent reserve could withstand such a shock, and she found herself laughing and blushing as the two dismayed gentlemen looked at their mutual plight. Mr. Crittenden was the first to recover ; as he wiped the dust from his eyes he glanced up, and then uttered an exclamation of pleased surprise.

“Do you know, Miss Farland, that we owe a vote of thanks for that lucky blow ? Look, Hal, is not that just what we want ?”

Louie was not a little bewildered as she saw the two gentlemen carefully examine the bit of projecting wall which jutted out from the surrounding ruin, and where she soon began to distinguish the gleaming of something red. The young men seemed too much in earnest, as they carefully removed the rest of the earth and rubbish, to notice her questions, finally Harry said,—

“One moment, Miss Louie, and you shall know

all; or, rather, here—Crittenden, give me the fragment that you have in your pocket, that will be the shortest way.”

Mr. Crittenden handed his friend a small object carefully wrapped in paper, and then went on with his work. Louie, removing the paper, saw a fragment of deep red stucco such as one sees constantly in the excavations at Rome and elsewhere, and on which, half-effaced, as it seemed, by time, there was a small female head, which even in its present damaged condition was full of grace and classical beauty.

“What do you think of it?” asked Harry Lester.

“I have too little knowledge of these Pompeian paintings,” modestly replied Louie, “to form any opinion of it; but it seems to me very beautiful.”

“You would say that this was a Pompeian fragment, then?”

“I say Pompeian, because one sees this sort of thing principally on the frescoes taken from the houses of Pompeii; but I presume that most of the villas and palaces in Italy were, in those days, decorated after the same fashion. Was this head found among the Capri ruins?”

"Well, yes—no—that is—not exactly!" at which puzzling answer Louie looked so bewildered that the gentlemen had some trouble to restrain their merriment; then Mr. Crittenden, leaving his excavating, took the fragment from her hand, and said,—

"This bit of antiquity, Miss Farland—this gracefully classic head—was painted yesterday, and I stood by to see it done. Now pray do not look so distressed, you are not the first who has been deceived in this matter."

"But I cannot understand——"

"Of course not! permit me to explain the mystery. Within the last few days we have had an addition to our *table-d'hôte* in the person of a wiry, red-headed, nervous Frenchman, a monomaniac on two points, the collection of antiquities and the love of bargains; he came here with a firm belief that he should find treasures hidden away in the peasants' houses, and that these he should be able to buy for almost nothing. So the people about, incited by my friends the French artists, form an almost continual procession to this individual's quarters, bringing with them great loads of the veriest rubbish, all of which M. Lelouche examines with a mock-antiquarian's solemn attention. The latest

treasure I saw just as I was leaving the inn ; four girls were gravely carrying on their heads a huge beam, probably taken from some abandoned hut, so rotten and old that its greatest claim to being a curiosity certainly was, that it stood the transport without crumbling away into nothingness ! ”

“ I see,” said Louie, smiling, “ this treasure—this piece of antiquity—is to be the gem of his collection ? ”

“ Exactly ; one of the artists, who has been particularly amused by the antiquarian’s antics, determined to play a trick on him. A number of his friends, I among them, were at his studio yesterday, when he took up this little bit of stucco, which he happened to have, and announced his intention of converting it into a real Pompeian bit—and, by the way, no one could be better fitted to imitate the antique, for he is celebrated for the classical beauty of his works. We crowded around him as, with extraordinary facility, he painted in this little head—you should have seen him maltreat the little gem, so as to give it the look of age ! He took up a handful of earth, rubbed it on, then took a little soot, some dust, and, in a few minutes, it assumed its present appearance ; the

whole process occupied something less than half an hour. Our antiquarian is to see the treasure to-morrow at dinner, and I assure you I anticipate good sport."

"You must let me know the end of this affair," said Louie, amused at this glimpse into a world of which she knew nothing.

"Of course he must!" exclaimed Harry. "After all, you know, the fellow is not much to be pitied, for the paintings he is to receive will far exceed in value the pitiful sums which he will consent to give for them."

"Now," observed Louie, pleased with the share which chance had given her in the affair, "I begin to perceive the use of yonder bit of red, gleaming stucco——"

"Which," interrupted Mr. Crittenden, "without that lucky blow of yours, we might have looked for in vain for long hours; the object of our visit to the ruins was, in fact, to find just such a piece. See," he added, as, with his friend's help, he at last detached it from the jutting fragment of wall, "see, it is quite perfect, and the very thing needed by the artist for a more ambitious attempt, which is to excite Lelouche's greed to the highest possible pitch."

After a little more talk and laughter they all

turned back toward the town ; any stiffness was now out of the question. As usual, chance had helped Carryl Crittenden even beyond his expectations ; he quietly took his place by his friend's side and entered into the pleasant intimacy of the group with the facility which characterized every thing this man did.

CHAPTER XII.

MARIANINA'S DREAM.

OH, the delight of a southern summer—of the long days succeeding each other in uninterrupted beauty—of the nights, balmy soft, and yet deliciously cool! There are some people so ill-conditioned as to find long-continued sunshine monotonous, and who ungratefully wish for clouds and storms; but Louie's spirits were too thoroughly in harmony with the weather to wish for any such disastrous change. It is true, as midsummer came, the heat was too great for much out-door sketching, but in the *canonico's* garden it was shady, and here, according to Harry Lester's advice, Louie established herself and attempted her first figure studies. The morning after the meeting in the ruins she took up a drawing commenced before Mr. Crittenden's arrival and worked at it resolutely. This

figure-drawing she found very difficult, for her want of anatomical knowledge was here very sensibly felt, and yet, when she confined herself to small pencil-drawings, she was able to give the character and sentiment of a head in a way that astonished her young master; she seemed to draw from instinct, but when, in a moment of ambition, she tried to replace that instinct by severe application she failed sadly.

As Louie was finishing her drawing that day she looked somewhat despondingly from it to her model—a little girl whose features were beautiful, but whose ideas of a model's duties were of the most tantalizingly loose kind; just then Harry Lester came up, and, glancing at her face, said,—

“ Miss Louie, I cannot allow you to work any more to-day; you are tired, and that little minx of a girl has about worn out your patience; send her away, and then, so that you may not consider your time wasted, I will give a lecture on the art of drawing.”

Louie always smiled when he assumed his little tone of command, on which rare occasions he made a whimsical attempt at looking like a grave professor. When the little girl had gone, she leaned back and said wearily,—

"I shall never do any thing really good, I am more and more convinced of it!"

"There! I expected some such speech from the expression of your face. Permit me to say that you ladies who take to art are the most unconscionable persons in the world. Do you know what you want? Simply to arrive, at one bound, as it were, after a few months' work and, I own it, considerable courage, at the same result which it takes us years and years of hard, unremitting work to attain. I know something of the student life of painters, at least in Paris, for I was rather more than a year in one of the best known *ateliers* of the capital. You should see how some of those poor fellows worked! One of them in particular I remember, who invariably came to the *atelier*, winter and summer, in the same cheap, thin suit of clothes: our master, who himself had risen from the lower ranks of life, encouraged this young fellow, who soon distanced us all, and, it was whispered, helped him with an occasional dinner or breakfast—those must have been gala days for the young man, who looked as though he literally half starved himself. I never shall forget the excitement of the whole twenty of us when, at the end of a *concours* for the 'grand prix de

Rome,' young Bennard was declared winner; we all cheered him heartily, and the poor fellow turned as white as my handkerchief, so great had been the nervous tension. Then the good master went up and cordially embraced him; I am sure he did not like his pupil the less for bursting into tears—ah, that was a glorious day for Bennard! but think of the years of hard work and privations with which he purchased it! Yet you ladies, who keep your drawing materials between your work-box and the latest novel, are discouraged if you do not obtain immediate success—if in your efforts one misses a knowledge which you have had no opportunity of acquiring. I know a number of lady artists, and most of them are indignant that their studios are less frequented than those of their male rivals. They do not take into consideration that early, serious training is absolutely necessary to the production of any thing really artistic: as a general thing they rely almost exclusively on what natural talent they may happen to have; and they will not acknowledge that painting is, after all, far less the work of inspiration than the result of hard labour. You see, many of them take to art when the other interests of life fail them—and then they accuse the pre-

judices of society with their want of success."

Louie smiled rather sadly as she listened to this tirade and watched the young artist excitedly walking up and down the little path; when he approached her, she said,—

"But, Mr. Lester, I have no intention of opening a studio, nor do I ever expect to be classed among serious artists. My ambition is far less lofty; I merely wish to improve sufficiently to be able to earn my bread as drawing-teacher, for I am tired of the dependent life of governess or companion."

These words were uttered almost painfully, and Louie's eyes were fixed on the ground. During her seclusion she had schooled herself to think of this as her destiny, and she had come to the conclusion that to let herself float idly on to an unknown fate was not only foolish, but wrong. Harry started, more at the tone of her voice than at the words themselves. She earn her bread as drawing-mistress! she whom he loved!—yes, as he looked down on the delicate face he felt that indeed he loved her. Should he tell her so before Crittenden's influence should again come between them? Yet, to encounter all the worries of a poor marriage—

would his strength be equal to it? Ah, for some middle course! As these thoughts rapidly passed through his mind Louie, astonished at his silence, looked up; then, as she caught his look, she blushed deeply. This blush decided him; leaning over the back of her chair, he said,—

“I cannot bear to think of you as subjected to all the petty trials of a life of work——”

“Yet,” interrupted Louie quickly, determined not to let the softness of his tone keep her from her purpose, “a life of work is my evident fate; only I shall try and make that work as agreeable as possible. Why should I deceive myself—why should you wish me to deceive myself—about what must be?” she added, almost passionately, while the colour faded from her cheeks.

“Louie,” he whispered—for the first time neglecting to put before the name the protecting “Miss”—“it seems so cruel to wish to peer into the future; are we not happy as we are? and then why should we not——”

The sentence was never finished, for just at that moment Crittenden's clear, strong voice resounded through the garden.

“I say, Lester, where are you?”

Instinctively Harry assumed a less lover-like

attitude, and something like a choked sob rose in Louie's throat—once more she felt that she hated Carryl Crittenden.

"This way, Crittenden!" called out Harry, in as steady a voice as he could command.

"I hope I am not disturbing any important art discussion," observed the young man as he advanced towards them, accentuating the last words with just a shade of irony which did not escape Louie; instead of daunting her, however, it gave her courage, and she answered, smiling, after returning his bow,—

"It is a discussion in which I have no doubt you will join with pleasure. Mr. Lester, in an eloquent speech, was trying to warn me of what he considers the besetting sin of lady artists—presumption!"

"Just like his impudence! Do not listen to him, Miss Farland! or, rather, force him to acknowledge that it is a sin still more common among the male votaries of art, for, between you and me, those painters are the vainest set of fellows it has ever been my luck to encounter!"

"Leave off abusing us, Crittenden, do! it has been my aim to inspire Miss Farland with a due respect for the brotherhood, and if you destroy

what I have so carefully built up, I shall never forgive you! Besides, I see by your expression that you bring news from the *table-d'hôte?*"

"Yes," answered Mr. Crittenden; "but, first of all, I must tell you, Miss Farland, that your piece of stucco was duly appreciated, and that a part of the morning was spent in painting on it two small female figures, one bacchante crowning her companion with a wreath of vine-leaves."

"What a shame," exclaimed Harry, "that such really beautiful things should pass into the possession of this vulgar ignoramus!"

"As yet he only has the little head I showed Miss Farland yesterday; this larger attempt belongs now to one of my artist friends. As I entered the dining-room at midday Lelouche rushed at me and, trembling with excitement, showed me the little head. 'Look at that—look at that, my dear Monsieur! What should you say it was?' I deliberately turned the thing so as to get a better light on it, and remained in silent contemplation for some moments. 'My dear Monsieur Lelouche,' I at last solemnly said, 'I congratulate you! My opinion is that this closely resembles the frescoes of

Herculaneum, which, as I need not remind a person of your knowledge in such matters is the highest praise that could be bestowed on it.' 'Did I not say so?' exclaimed the wiry Frenchman, jumping about me, and, to my horror, threatening in his enthusiasm to embrace me. 'You doubtless paid a considerable sum for this treasure?' I added. Lelouche's delight at this question was unbounded. 'I paid—guess what!—twelve *sous* for it! I chose it out of a dozen others.' Then, with inimitable pomposity, he continued, 'J'ai du flair, moi, hein?' But the great fun was when the owner of the larger piece—your piece, Miss Farland—modestly uncovered it, and said, 'I, too, made a purchase, Lelouche, but I had not your luck; I paid five francs for it.' Lelouche rushed forward and, with trembling hands, seized the fragment. 'Five francs!—malheureux! you will spoil the market—five francs! and this treasure was not offered to me?—why, I should have got it for twenty *sous* easily. O gentlemen, you will break my heart! it will be impossible henceforth to do business here in Capri; you have spoiled the market—five francs! but it is monstrous!'"

Mr. Crittenden's two listeners laughed heartily

for he acted the whole scene with a spirit and power of mimicry rarely found in Englishmen. Then gradually the conversation turned to other topics.

It was very pleasant, Louie thought, to sit there in the old garden lazily conscious of the soft summer air, and listening to two young men who would have been liked or admired in any society; it was very pleasant to feel that it was her presence which animated their conversation, and that to interest or amuse her was the leading motive of both. This would have been flattering to any woman; it was doubly so to her who, till now, had been cut off from any such enjoyment.

"I believe, Miss Farland," said Mr. Crittenden, "that you permit smoking out of doors; I shall be glad to take advantage of your indulgence, my nerves need quieting after the excitement of the day. You must know that, beside the affair with Lelouche, I have been doing my duty as a stranger. I went this morning to the Blue Grotto; you have been, of course?"

"Yes," answered Louie; "Mr. Lester took me there some time ago."

"How were you pleased?"

"At first, I own, I was a little disappointed."

"I suppose you had the mystical, unreal, and, I must add, not over correct description of it in the 'Improvisatore' fresh in your mind; and, instead of a swoon, floating visions of a beautiful girl, mingled with a sensation of danger, the whole merged in an atmosphere of mystical beauty, you found that being carried in on the wave lying in the bottom of a small, uncomfortable boat, and listening to the dissertations of an ugly old man—perhaps, even, seeing that same ugly old man plunge in and assume the appearance of an extraordinary silvered frog with a hideous black head—was something far less poetical and entrancing!"

"Perhaps so," answered Louie, laughing.

"Then," continued Mr. Crittenden, "boating about the island is not agreeable to most ladies, for even in calm weather there is a heavy underswell dreadfully suggestive of sea-sickness."

"I am fortunately a good sailor," said Louie; "indeed I know few things more delightful than being out at sea when the waves are strong enough to make the boat dance, and even strong enough to give a sensation of danger; it imparts a feeling of exultation which is thoroughly exhilarating. I promise myself,

as a great treat, to make an excursion all round the island before my departure—it takes only a little more than three hours, I believe.”

“You will let me be of the party, will you not? Speaking of excursions, there is one which I wish to propose. I understand that you have not yet been up to Anacapri, and I want both you and Lester to put yourselves under my supreme direction one day next week, for I have a great desire to play cicerone and take you there; I went up when I was here before, and therefore am quite competent, I assure you, to fill the office of guide. Seriously speaking, the excursion would be really interesting—artistically interesting, to put it in a more seductive form—and it would give me real pleasure to play the part of host during six or seven hours.”

That Mr. Crittenden was in earnest was very evident. Louie at first refused very decidedly; such an excursion did not at all enter into the plan of conduct which she had traced for herself; but as Mr. Lester joined his friend in urging her consent, and both young men used very powerful arguments, she finally yielded. It was arranged that Marianina should accompany her

mistress, and the party was fixed for the following Tuesday.

Louie's life, delightful as it seemed to her, was yet so unvaried by incident, that the prospect of this Anacapri excursion assumed in her mind an importance which, apparently at least, it did not deserve. Hitherto, the short expeditions which she had made alone, or in the company of Harry Lester, had been, generally speaking, unpremeditated, or connected with some idea of sketching; but this one was to be of a different character; it was, in the first place, to take up almost the whole of a day, and she was allowed no voice in any of the arrangements—these Mr. Crittenden took upon himself.

The time which elapsed between the proposal to make the excursion and its fulfilment passed pleasantly enough; only Louie noticed a change, a gradual, but marked change in Mr. Crittenden's manner; he sought her society continually, taking advantage of his character of man of leisure to meet her at odd times when she was sketching and while Lester was at work in his studio. This sort of intimacy troubled her, yet the young man's manner was so perfectly respectful that she had no pretext for seeming displeased,

while Marianina's presence, prevented the awkwardness of a *tête-à-tête*. On these occasions he employed all he possessed of eloquence—and when he chose he could be really eloquent—to give charm to his descriptions of travels, to his reminiscences of famous men, to his short, clever analysis of books which she had never seen. He entirely put aside in these conversations that affectation of cynicism which was habitual to him, he spoke not only as a clever man, but also as a man of heart. Only sometimes he touched—very delicately, it is true—on subjects which alarmed her and made her instinctively shrink; he had lived so much in a world where wickedness is cloaked with a certain poetic charm, that this was sometimes apparent in his conversation—apparent is, perhaps, scarcely the word—it threw, as it were, just a slight shade over the whole tone of his talk without ever becoming palpable enough to give the slightest pretence for offence; but its influence was nevertheless felt. Louie was bewildered; this man was so very different from the one which, from Harry's descriptions, she had pictured to herself; his manner towards her was so perfectly respectful, his sentiments often so nobly expressed, that she asked herself why it was that often, in

thinking over some interview with him, she felt uneasy and alarmed.

Mr. Crittenden was satisfied with his progress, though he gradually became convinced that Louie was no ordinary soft-hearted girl whom a lover-like glance could subdue; he was willing to work quietly towards the vanquishing of this proud nature; he felt that he must bewilder and dazzle the mind before attempting the slightest attack on the heart, fortified, as it was, with a previous affection; still he was satisfied with his progress. During this time the two young men, in their intimate talk, rarely spoke of Louie Farland.

The Tuesday of the excursion proved to be a lovely, soft summer's day, less warm than had been feared. In the morning Marianina went up to Louie's room to offer her services as maid. This was a real treat to the young peasant, to whom Louie's modest wardrobe, and still more modest stock of ornaments afforded immense pleasure. The love of finery is by no means confined to the classes which can afford to indulge their tastes, and Marianina's delight when she came into possession of a cast-off ribbon or a bright-coloured handkerchief was unbounded. But on this occasion she smoothed out the folds of

the plain white dress which Louie had chosen, and played with the blue ribbons, in an abstracted manner. Occasionally she would look up at her young mistress with a half shy, half puzzled look. This unusual silence at last struck Louie, and she said, with a smile,—

“Come, Marianina, what is it troubles you ? is the little one ill, or has Giovanni written you a scolding letter ?”

“No, Signorina, it is not that ; but——” and then she stopped.

“But what ? I see, you want to be coaxed ; tell me what the matter is, or I shall think you no longer care for me.”

“Ah, you know that I love you, my Signorina !” and she impulsively kissed the white hand extended to her ; then, after a little hesitation, she said, “I had a dream last night—I who generally sleep so soundly that it seems that evening and morning touch each other by the hand ! I thought that I was with you in a large field, and that it was as though the sun looked at us through a cloud the colour of blood ; it was almost dark, yet I saw clearly enough to distinguish the shapes of serpents

winding about on the ground—oh, how I hate serpents!” she added, with a shiver.

“As to that part of the dream, Marianina, it is easily explained,” observed Louie, quietly tying her neck-ribbon; “you know, *cara mia*, that dreams are usually but an exaggerated and distorted representation of events that have actually taken place. Do you not remember, two days ago, when we were returning from the Arca Naturale, that you screamed and jumped aside because a small snake had crossed your path? I laughed at your terror then, and, I assure you, I feel much inclined to laugh at your pretty scared face now;” and Louie, perhaps unconsciously, looked down from the height of her English common sense on the weakness of Italian superstition.

“Ah, but Signorina, you do not know what a feeling it is to see snakes all about one, and to fear to make a step lest one tread on the horrible creatures! Now you look proud and strong, but in my dream you were white and frightened. We held each other by the hand, and I felt yours tremble and grow cold; then a serpent, larger than the others, hissed and seemed about to attack me, but, instead, it

turned quickly upon you—O saints in heaven! I thought I should have died with fear. There was a large stone at my feet; I picked it up, and tried to hurl it at the serpent's head, but my hand was held back somehow and lost its power. You grew pale as death and looked me in the eyes—oh, I shall never forget that look, it seemed to stop the beating of my heart! Then I woke—*Madonna mia!* what a relief it was to find myself safe in my bed, with my baby close to me!”

“It was certainly not a pleasant dream,” assented Louie, while, to her astonishment, a slight shiver ran through her. “Close the door, Marianina, I think the draught is too strong.”

“But I have not told you all,” said Marianina, after she had shut the door.

“What, did you go to sleep again, and dream the same dream once more?”

“No, it was almost morning, so I got up quietly, so as not to wake my boy; I was half glad to have wakened early, as I had some sewing to do. It was pleasant sitting on my doorstep; and as the sun rose above the hill I took heart, and wondered that I should have been so frightened; I began to sing the song of ‘Mariuccia’—you know, the one you like,” and she hummed,—

“Sotto la tua finestra mi metto a passeggiar,
Passeggio sotto e sotto senza veder m' amante ;
Perciò che la domando, Mariuccia mia, ah ! dov' è ?”

“When I had finished that verse, think how startled I was when a voice took up the song, and repeated,—

‘Perciò che la domando, Mariuccia mia, ah ! dov' è ?’

I gave a little scream as I saw the tall Englishman that we, among ourselves, call ‘il bel Satano’—because, Signorina, he does look like the Satan in the altar-picture—come up to where I sat. I grew frightened, just as I was frightened in my dream, for we girls of the Marina, who have much to do with strangers, know how bad men are—I thought my heart would break away from my side. He saw it, and laughed. ‘Good morning, Signore ; you are up early,’ I said, so as not to seem frightened ; ‘you wanted to be ready in good time for the Anacapri excursion ?’ ‘Yes, I am up early,’ he answered ; ‘the truth is, Mariuccia’—he called me Mariuccia, you see, and not Marianina, on account of the song ; they are both the same name—‘the truth is, I slept so badly that I deserve to have some compensation ; so, hearing your voice, I came up to ask you for a kiss ;’ and he repeated, ‘Mariuccia mia,

ah! dov' è?' 'No, Signore,' I said, taking up my child, who was running about with nothing but his little shirt on, in my arms, 'I cannot give you a kiss, for it would be a sin.' 'Not at all; it is the priests who have told you that, but it is not true; besides, even if it is, I will pay you for it. Come, I am not accustomed to wait; just give me one kiss, and I will leave you.' 'No, Signore; I will call my old neighbour to protect me; I will not give you a kiss, for Giovanni would not like it.' The gentleman came a step nearer, but, as I ran from him, he gave me a wicked look, and said something to himself that must have been a bad word in his own language; then again he laughed and opened his purse. 'See, you may have as many pieces as you like—enough to buy you a gold cross. Come, your *sposo* need know nothing about it; be reasonable; I had such a bad night, I must have a kiss—it is better than a cigar.' I opened my mouth to scream, at which he turned away angrily, and as he went he called out, 'Little fool! you are not worth the trouble of running after; I shall have something better than one of your kisses before the sun goes down.' Ah, Signorina, how wicked men are! But I am sure the *biondo* Signore would not have given

me such a fright—he has not bad, black eyes.”

Louie had listened all this time in silence. This was indeed a startling phase of Mr. Crittenden's character. She could not doubt Marianina's truth, for the poor child was still evidently under the influence of her terror; yet it was difficult to reconcile the elevated sentiments with which his conversation was intermingled, the deep respect which he evinced towards herself, with this vulgar and revolting scene. She did not speak, but stood leaning against the window, her head turned half away. Marianina, however, soon tired of this silence, and said,—

“Signorina, do you wonder now that I was so quiet when I came in?”

“No, poor little one; you must stay near me all day, and then this wicked man cannot frighten you again. I should like not to go to Anacapri at all, but I do not see how I can avoid it; all the preparations are made, and Carmella, who was in here this morning, could certify that I am quite well. You are a good girl, Marianina, and I am very fond of you!”

“And, Signorina,” said Marianina, in a timid voice, after she had responded to this impulse of

affection by demonstrative caresses, "you do not think this one handsomer than our *biondo* Signore, do you?"

"No, Marianina, not so handsome—not half as handsome!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LIFTING OF THE MASK.

IT was in vain that, after this conversation, Louie tried to devise some scheme for avoiding the Anacapri excursion. She could not tell the truth, and, never having been accustomed to fashionable society, did not know how to lie, so she determined to go, arming herself with a double degree of caution; aiding this resolution was a certain half-avowed desire to measure herself against this man—this was wrong, of course, but then Louie was by no means perfect. When she at last joined the young men she was so very quiet and reserved that they both noticed it, and Mr. Crittenden guessed at once that Marianina had related all the morning's occurrences. This did not disturb him much, for he was a bold man, and played his game openly enough, as his conversation with his

friend, when Louie was first discussed by them, amply proved. Had he, however, judged less from generalities, and had he not, with all the outward respect of his manner, felt a great contempt for women in general, he might possibly have been less confident. As it was, he relied with magnificent security on his physical and mental advantages; he knew himself to be that morning in "a good vein," as he called it; and, furthermore, he was satisfied with his appearance, for the costume which he had adopted—a cross between a hunting and boating dress—set off to advantage the superb proportions of his figure.

The path which runs from the town of Capri to the foot of the Anacapri steps is very rough, but then it commands a magnificent view of the bay of Naples. The island, every where rocky and uneven, preserves nevertheless the general aspect of a valley, ended on one side by a high hill, at the summit of which stand the ruins of the Palazzo di Tiberio, and at other extremity by a far higher and broader mountain, which occupies, in fact, nearly half of the whole island, and on one extremity of which stands the town of Anacapri. From their isolated position, and from various other circumstances, a rivalry of

many hundred years' standing has existed between the inhabitants of the lower and upper villages.

"I shall never be able to go up all those steps!" exclaimed Louie, forgetting a little of her reserve as she looked up; and indeed it did seem rather a formidable undertaking, for the only means of communication from that side of the island up to Anacapri consists of 560 steps cut in the living rock. All day long one sees the Anacapri girls, with heavy burdens on their heads, tripping up and down with a lightness and rapidity which inspire ordinary mortals with astonishment and envy.

"We should have done better," suggested Harry, "to have taken a boat to the other side, and to have gone up by Limbo."

"That has a lugubrious sound," said Louie, smiling; "I daresay I shall manage very well after all."

"Remember, you have both promised to submit to my guidance, and you, Miss Farland, are to give the first proof of obedience." While speaking, Mr. Crittenden had been busy knotting the two ends of a long scarf securely to his stout walking-stick.

"What on earth are you doing, Crittenden?"

"Patience, my dear Hal; I am going to show you that the spirit of invention is not entirely monopolized by our Yankee cousins. I could not resign myself to see Miss Farland subjected to the misery of being carried in a *portantina*; and, on the other hand, I cannot allow her to fatigue herself by going up unaided. Now, Miss Louie, do me the favour to pass this scarf about your waist—it is of silk and very strong—then Lester and I will take hold of the stick, and so help you up."

"Oh, please, I should so much prefer not to make use of your original invention. I assure you that I have more strength and endurance than you give me credit for!"

"You have your choice between this invention of mine and a *portantina*. We should have to send all the way back to the village for one, and by that time the sun on these steps would be unendurable—still, if you insist, I, for my part, am prepared to broil."

Louie had no alternative left but to submit, so she passed the gay scarf about her waist. At first she would not bear her weight fully on it, but by degrees she found that by doing so the ascent was made so delightfully easy that she leaned back and laughed like a child at her

novel position ; indeed, it would have been difficult to have maintained her dignified reserve under the circumstances. But for the presence of Marianina, who followed, leading the reluctant donkey who felt much aggrieved at being forced up the steps, she might have forgotten that the pleasant, laughing, fine-looking man who was the animating spirit of the little party ever had had other thoughts than those of ministering to the comfort and enjoyment of those about him.

Somewhat more than half way up the ascent stands a little white chapel ; here they all sat down to rest, and to enjoy the view which already assumed grand proportions ; the bay of Naples appeared in all its wonderful beauty, while, from over the hill of Tiberio, a glimpse of the Gulf of Salerno was just visible. Harry Lester, as he threw himself on the step below where Louie was sitting, exclaimed, looking up at her,—

“How I like to look at you with this glorious background ! I shall always connect with you thoughts of the most beautiful nature that it has yet been my good fortune to enjoy ; you come in very naturally as the principal figure of the picture.” Then he added, rather irrelevantly, “Why is it that you are so different to other women, Miss Louie ?”

"With every wish to appropriate what flattering intention there may have been in your speech, Mr. Lester," answered Louie, "I cannot allow that I differ much from the rest of my sex; it seems to me there must be thousands of women in England who are my very counterparts."

"There you are mistaken," interrupted Carryl Crittenden; "in the more salient parts of your character, I allow, you are eminently English, but there is a warm depth to your nature which is far more southern than northern. Your anger, once aroused, would be slow to subside, Miss Louie, and," he added, with emphasis, "your love would be something very different from the diluted sentiment which passes current in the world under that name—but, pardon me, these dissertations are scarcely in good taste." There was a short silence; then, as though he had been ruminating on the subject, Mr. Crittenden went on to say, "Besides, your life is, and probably has been, very unlike the life of most of your sex;" and he looked at her curiously. Louie felt the question which that look conveyed, and the old grey shade so long banished from her face returned to it, as she slowly said,—

"Yes, you are right, for most women know the real meaning of life, whereas my history is contained in these three words—I have existed."

There was that in her voice which forbade any continuation of the subject. Harry hastened to introduce other topics, and finally he spoke of Lelouche, who, disappointed at not securing more treasures, and disgusted at the extravagance of the artists, had just left the island for Naples.

"Where," added Harry, "he will show his mock-antique to people better informed than himself who will let him into the secret."

"Perhaps," answered Crittenden, carelessly, "that matters but little; he has amused us, and that is a great deal—for it is very difficult to find amusement in this dreary world of ours!" Louie looked up quickly: the man who had written that note which Harry had read to her—the man who had found pleasure in frightening poor Marianina was before her, taking the place of the eloquent and fascinating companion who had lately charmed so many of her hours. To be amused, even for a little while, that was his object; whether by an eccentric monomaniac or by a fresh-natured girl mattered little, the result was the same. Carryl Crittenden

caught the look: it was instantaneous, but it was so full of distrust, almost of fear, that he perceived that he had made a mistake.

"Come," said he, while one of his most brilliant smiles replaced the look of careless superciliousness with which he had uttered his last sentence, "we are but indolent pleasure-seekers! Here, Hal, let us harness ourselves once more to our sweet yoke. Confess, Miss Louie, that a man's strength is of some use on occasions like this?"

"I confess it, for I am not at all tired; indeed I feel so fresh and strong that I beg to be allowed to go the rest of the way without being, in very truth, a burden to you both," and Louie look dubiously at the scarf.

"Pardon me, but I cannot allow you to turn rebel now; you must know that my will is even stronger than my arm!" so saying, he passed the scarf about her, as he did so his hand touched her waist and lingered there an instant, as though loath to leave its resting-place. It might have been mere accident, thought Louie; but as she met the look of his dark eyes she grew troubled, and for some minutes remained silent. When the last step was reached, there was no further excuse for the use of the scarf,

and as she quickly freed herself from it, Louie gave a little sigh of relief; Carryl Crittenden heard the sigh, and smiled.

The village of Anacapri stands at some little distance from the edge of the high cliff, and the roads or paths leading to it are less uneven and rugged than those of the rival *paese*. The whole aspect, indeed, upon the comparatively flat-topped mountain is far less varied and interesting than the aspect of the lower part of the island; but, on the other hand, one catches from time to time a glimpse of the splendid panorama of island-dotted, coast-bounded sea which, glorified by an Italian summer's sun, is indeed a spectacle not easily to be forgotten. Some of the village houses are eminently picturesque, though one misses the covered streets and arcades of Capri itself. They are built as no sane peasant houses could be built in the north, for the entrance is usually just where one would not expect an entrance to be, and most often opens on to a small courtyard ornamented with a row of half-broken columns, or rather pillars, or with a flight of uneven steps leading to the upper storey of the house, or, perhaps, to the terrace-like roof, should there be but one storey; these

courts are generally trellised with grape-vines ; add a figure or two—an old woman spinning, a half-naked child rolling about, or, better still, a slight, tall girl with a sort of beauty which strongly recalls the grand Egyptian type—an impression often strengthened by a bright-coloured handkerchief worn in the style of a sphinx head-gear—and one has a picture all composed, full of character and full of expressive beauty. So, at least, said Harry Lester, who, now that artistic subjects were started, once more assumed the more important place in the conversation which, until now, his friend had usurped.

Having walked about the village streets, the party visited the church, admired its curious faïence pavement, which represents the garden of paradise, with a full assortment of beasts, birds, and reptiles, besides full-length figures of our first parents after the fall, in the act of being driven out by the angel.

“Take care, Miss Louie! have you so little respect for the universal mother as to walk over her?” exclaimed Mr. Crittenden; “but come, you are tired now in earnest, besides it is getting so warm that we shall all be glad to rest in the little grove I have selected as our lunching-place, and also, perhaps, none of us will be averse to

enjoy the luncheon itself; I, for one, am ravenous. It is a good thing your donkey followed us, for you look very pale—poor child!” he added, in a low tone, as he assisted her to mount; then he continued, gaily, “After luncheon we are to have a tarantella—a regular tarentella—in a peasant’s terrace close to our resting-place.”

“What an excellent idea, Crittenden!” exclaimed Harry, “for Miss Louie has never seen one. What a good thing it is that I should have brought my sketch-book; I want particularly to study the movements of the women as they dance.”

All the way to the little grove Harry Lester stayed close by Louie; to this Mr. Crittenden did not seem to object at all, he lingered a little behind, and tried to make Marianina look at him and talk; but the young peasant had been too thoroughly frightened to recover her spirits easily; she was inclined to believe him to be the evil one in person, and when he spoke to her she crossed herself rapidly and shrank away; this seemed to afford him immense amusement. Once, when Louie saw that he was not within hearing, she leaned over and said, in a hurried whisper,—

“Please, Mr. Lester, whenever I need help, give it me yourself; I would prefer it.”

For all answer the young man took her hand, and pressed it warmly. "Ah," thought he, with pardonable vanity, "I have nothing to fear, even from him!"

The spot which the giver of the feast had selected was deliciously cool and suggestive of repose. It was a small olive grove, and through the dusky foliage one caught delightful glimpses of the distant sea; there was a house near by, but it was hidden by some accident of the ground, and within hearing was a gurgling stream, the only one in that part of the country; it trickled from a high rock hard by, and wandered through the grove before coming to the fountain erected to secure the precious drops. There are two serious drawbacks to the delights of Capri—the lack of shade trees and the scarcity of water: Mr. Crittenden had chosen perhaps the only spot where these two drawbacks were not felt.

"Welcome to my shady nook!" he said, as, with a sensation of relief, the party left the almost intolerable heat of the road for the pleasant grove. As he spoke those words he assumed in earnest the character of host, and it was a character that became him well.

"Crittenden," exclaimed Harry, glancing with the eyes of a hungry man at the tempting luncheon already spread, "I forgive you all your airs of superiority past, present, and to come, in consideration of this most inviting repast! Was ever man as hungry as I? Miss Louie, if you have some mercy left, sit down, or I shall be forced to break through all rules of politeness and begin first."

"I perceive," remarked Mr. Crittenden, with a marked emphasis, which both his hearers perfectly understood, "that you are in the state of mind which influenced Esau when he sold his rights for a mess of porridge; all right, Hal, I am ready to strike a bargain!" then, suddenly changing his tone, he said, "I ordered all things to be prepared before our arrival, so as not to be annoyed by gaping attendants; your Marianina can wait on us, should any waiting be necessary—and now, without any further ceremony, let us begin."

It would have been difficult to have withstood the genial urbanity which, as feast-giver, Carryl Crittenden knew how to insinuate in his most trifling words and actions. Under the influence of this urbanity Louie's quiet distrust once more vanished; she could not but wonder

at the pliancy of this man's character; with no apparent effort he changed his manner, the tone of his voice, his expression, to suit the different circumstances in which he found himself; yet, under all these phases, there was a marked individuality, a dash of personality, as it were, which prevented even commonplace actions from seeming commonplace. In doing the honours of the luncheon he laughed and talked with such contagious gaiety that even Louie, in spite of intrusive thoughts, soon joined with spirit in the conversation. Mr. Crittenden told anecdotes of his travels, giving just enough value to past dangers and privations to make one appreciate present plenty and security:

Marianina, from her corner, observed the party with wondering eyes. "Dio mio!" thought she, "ma, è Satano proprio!" for, according to her simple experience of life, the power which one man exercises over his fellow-men, when carried to such an extent, could only be accounted for by supernatural reasonings.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPRING IN THE OLIVE GROVE.

AS the shadows began to lengthen, and the heat of the day to become tempered by an evening breeze, the noise of a tambourine became audible. Marianina jumped up with an animation which she had not yet displayed; the tambourine was marking the quick, regular time of the tarantella, and dancing was to her, in common with most Italian peasants, the very complement of human bliss.

"That's right, Marianina," exclaimed Mr. Crittenden, looking at her with lazy admiration through the white smoke of his cigar, "rouse yourself, for we shall have famous dancing presently!" then he added, in English, "Come, Miss Louie, let us go and see whether the national dance is worthy of its reputation. Do not forget your sketch-book, Hal, for I have

had the prettiest girls of the country chosen and the best male dancers to second them."

They went toward the house on the flat roof of which the tarantella was to be danced. As the party drew near the silence which had been so delightfully refreshing during the long rest in the olive grove was broken by the hum of many voices, varied by an occasional ringing laugh. This was indeed a great occasion for these people whose hard life was rarely diversified by any thing more exciting than the church *feste*, with their processions and subsequent evening fireworks. There was but little shyness among these bright-eyed peasants, and none of that sheepish, boorish awkwardness which so often distinguishes the freeborn English labourer. Most of the faces were handsome, one or two among them strictly beautiful, and a certain look of brightness and intelligence distinguished them all. Harry Lester, who had made use of some of the girls as models, was greeted by smiles and good-natured jokes, for the "Inglese biondo" was a great favourite among them.

Presently the tambourine from above began to mark a more lively measure, and all the dancers rushed merrily up the stone steps that

wound outside of the house, followed more leisurely by the strangers.

The tarantella was begun with great animation; Marianina joined in it with such spirit that, for the time at least, she forgot her fright and her shrinking from the "bel Satano;" so much so, indeed, that when he gaily joined the dancers she found herself balancing in front of him, merrily clapping her hands or snapping her fingers, and reversing his movements according to the rules of the dance; only when, in the course of the figure, he tried to catch her by the waist she lightly evaded him and went back to her original partner. He laughed, and then turned to where Louie was sitting looking on with much amusement.

"There is something delightfully characteristic and southern in this, is there not?" he said, looking on at the dancers and encouraging them with look and gesture.

"Yes, indeed," answered Louie; "I am so glad to see a real tarantella, and I think this one peculiarly successful; there is something original in the terrace-like roof; then the house is so isolated that we are not surrounded by staring strangers, we have it all to ourselves. How well the figures of the dancers tell against

the deep blue sky! then there is the dark foliage of the wood yonder, and out there a glimpse of the beautiful sea. Altogether, Mr. Crittenden, I think you deserve the greatest credit for the *mise en scène* of your festivity."

"I am so glad you approve; I have really done all in my power to give you a little pleasure."

"Where did you learn to dance so well?" she added, hastily, fearing a return of the lover-like attitude.

"Merely by watching the others; then the time, marked as it is by the quick yet monotonous noise of the tambourine, forces one, as it were, to go right; beside, if one has a good partner, it would be difficult to make mistakes, one has but to watch the movements and reverse them; for example, if my partner raises her right hand and places the left on her hip, I do just the contrary; the principal thing is to keep in perpetual movement—some of those bare-footed girls are wonderfully lithe and graceful, do you not think so? the men, too, dance well. See, Lester is making good use of his time, there he is in his corner sketching away, forgetting us and all other things—what an absorbing passion that love of art is! If I

were a woman I should never marry an artist; I would fear this powerful rival. But come, Miss Louie, I know you are dying to join the dancers! I will give you a lesson;" and he began marking the time with his foot and imitating the noise of castanets with his fingers, while he looked down at her with the most enticing smile.

"I!" said Louie, shrinking back; "you do not know what you are proposing; why, I should cut the most lamentable figure possible—I never danced in my life! I should utterly fail in a simple polka—think of what it would be in a complicated dance like this!"

"I am sure you could do it."

"Signorina," exclaimed Marianina, her magnificent eyes flashing, her hair in disorder, and even while speaking keeping time to the tambourine which was being played faster and faster every minute, "I will teach you! you said once that you would like nothing so well as to dance a tarantella—come!"

At last, laughing, expostulating, and blushing, Louie found herself among the dancers, who welcomed her with noisy demonstrations of pleasure. At first her movements were awkward, but she soon entered into the spirit of

the thing, and, following the clear, simple instructions which Mr. Crittenden from time to time gave her, she soon danced with almost as much spirit as Marianina herself. Harry Lester, seeing this, could resist the temptation no longer, and, rushing forward, stood in front of her and, by voice and gesture, claimed her as his partner. She looked up at him in laughing confusion, and the two danced, not perhaps very correctly, but certainly with great animation, while Mr. Crittenden and Marianina followed the figures with greater precision. At last the dancers, panting, laughing, exhausted, left their places and sat down to rest.

"I thought they would never stop!" exclaimed Louie, as soon as she could recover breath enough to speak; "I only joined them at the end, yet it has tired me very much."

"That is because you are not accustomed to it; it is the happiness of these people—as soon as they have rested five minutes or so they will recommence, and would go on in the same way for hours. But though you are not as strong as these dancers, yet you caught the spirit of the thing remarkably well—I must congratulate you on your first attempt. Do you not think,

Hal, that Miss Louie might prove in time a serious rival to Marianina herself?"

"Certainly she might. How much more delightful this out-door dancing is than those dreadful ball-room crushes! Still I must not again allow myself to be tempted away from my corner—your tarantella, Carryl, has put a picture in my head, and I must make rapid sketches of attitudes and movements or the idea will be lost; look! these are mere meaningless scratches to the uninitiated, are they not? yet, to me, they represent the centre figures of a large picture."

"Do you mean to put Miss Louie in your picture as well as the bare-footed peasants?"

"If she will allow it—wait one moment!" and the young man, going a little to one side, where a grape vine had thrown some branches over the parapet, he chose the longest with delicate leaves and tendrils, and twisted it with truly artistic taste into a light wreath, then he returned and placed it on Louie's head. "What do you say to the effect?" he asked, going back some steps.

"I say that you have made of this English girl what she deserves to be—the dainty nymph of some sylvan dell. Joking apart, Miss Louie, it is very becoming—pray do not disturb it,

surely your dignity need not suffer from the contact of a few grape-leaves."

The wreath was indeed becoming; Louie's hair had been loosened by the dance, a stray curl fell over her shoulder, and her face was bright with smiles and blushes. Soon the tambourine-player, an odd looking, grey-haired man, with a red Neapolitan cap falling over one ear, struck his instrument. The dancers once more took their places, and Harry ran back to his nook and seized his sketch-book with renewed ardour.

"Will you not try it again?" asked Mr. Crittenden, turning toward Louie.

"No; my hair would be completely down if I danced five minutes more; beside, I am tired, and, oh, so thirsty!"

"Thirsty? let me get you some water;" as he said this his eye fell on one of those light pitchers such as the peasants use for carrying water, and which are still made after the elegant model of the ancient water-vases—this one was smaller than those usually seen; as Carryl took it up a sudden idea seemed to strike him.

"This pretty classical pitcher would complete your artistic 'get up,' Miss Louie, while it seems strangely out of keeping in my masculine hands."

"Which means," said Louie, taking it with a

smile, "that you feel lazy, and mean me to fetch the water myself."

"We might go together."

"No," she answered, very decidedly; "but really I should enjoy going down to that spring in the grove; if you will stay and dance, I promise to bring you back a draught of the cool, clear water."

"No; this is absurd!" he said, half angrily; "I shall send one of these girls down for water and wine."

"And then have a number of common-place glasses handed about in a common-place way! that would not suit me at all. Beside, my head aches a little with all this noise, and the quiet of the grove will do me good. Come! let me see you dancing before I go."

"Your word is law!" and the master of the feast, evidently making up his mind quickly to submit, turned away and, challenging a fine tall girl called Chiarella, was soon dancing. Louie stood some moments watching him, then turned and descended the stone steps unobserved.

It must be confessed that there was just a shade of coquetry in her manner of dismissing Mr. Crittenden. There may be some women quite free from that besetting sin of the sex, coquetry

—indeed one solitary instance of the phenomenon comes to my mind as I write, one only, the very exception proving the almost universal rule. Louie had more than once felt tempted to exercise this latent quality, defect, power, or whatever it should be called; hitherto prudence had restrained her, but on this occasion she yielded just a little to this feminine weakness—it is not my purpose to exonerate her from blame; I merely state a fact.

Louie easily found her way to the olive grove, which indeed almost touched the farm-yard, and walked quietly along the little path, thoroughly enjoying the soothing quiet of the place. Most pleasant was it when the noise of the trickling water began to mingle with the whisper of the evening air in the trees. At the sound her thirst became stronger, and she hastened toward the rock; the approach to it was not quite easy, for the little stream, after its tiny cascade, worked its way among large stones and rocky fragments on towards the fountain some fifty yards away; the ground all about was broken, so Louie tucked up her dress and picked her way with dainty care; finally she was rewarded by a draught of the fresh, pure water, which seemed at once to invigorate her and to take away her teasing headache.

This was such a lovely spot that it was no wonder if Louie, once her thirst slaked, should pause to enjoy its quiet beauty ; the noise of the tarentella faintly reached her ears and seemed to give greater value to the solitude just around. In looking down she caught a glimpse of her own face reflected in a little pool of the clear water, which, being prisoned between some rocks, made a perfect mirror. She smiled, and wondered that she, plain and unattractive so she had always considered herself, should form so fair a picture ; in a vague way she realized that it was the waking of her inner self which had given life and a sort of beauty to her face. Certain it was that, leaning gracefully forward, vine-crowned, flushed with her passing thoughts, her lips slightly parted showing the perfect white teeth, she was charmingly pretty ; she would not have been a woman if the knowledge of this had not brought with it a feeling of pleasure ; then spontaneously arose the thought, "Even a painter might find some charm in this face !" She retained her contemplative attitude even after she had once more lifted up the jug to catch the water as it fell ; the loose sleeves of her white dress fell back and allowed the arms to be seen ; they were remarkably well-shaped and white—and there are certainly

few things more enticingly beautiful than the fair, rounded arm of a young woman. So thought Carryl Crittenden, who, having allowed a short interval to elapse after her departure, had followed her, as any other woman but Louie Farland would have guessed he would; he had walked stealthily for fear of startling her, but she was so absorbed in her own reflections that she would probably not have heard his footsteps even if he had used less precaution. He stood some moments looking at the unconscious girl whose face was turned from him; then, obeying a strong impulse far more than any preconceived plan, he leaned forward and, seizing the white arm nearest him, passionately kissed it. Louie uttered a frightened scream and let the pitcher fall; it broke at her feet in a hundred pieces, and the water splashed on to her white dress; with her disengaged hand she tried to still the violent beating of her heart, but terror had taken such complete possession of her as to deprive her of her presence of mind; she felt utterly helpless, and it was a minute or two before she had the power even to snatch her arm away; then she stood quite still, vainly trying to summon courage to face her traitor host, or physical strength to fly toward the house.

To his own surprise Carryl Crittenden ~~was~~

almost as much moved as Louie herself; unconsciously the plan he had first proposed to himself had undergone an important modification; he had intended to make himself beloved, keeping meanwhile his own heart free; but in the prosecution of his scheme, in his daily intercourse with Louie, he had conceived a sort of passionate admiration for her which was so genuine, so unlike the meaningless caprices of late years, that he experienced a pleased surprise. Now, looking down upon the trembling figure of this pale girl, whose weakness at that moment was sacred even to him, he felt that he would risk much, give up much even, to win her for himself. With these feelings swaying him, he poured out such vehement pleadings, expressions of a love so passionate, that poor Louie grew too bewildered even for anger; her senses were dazzled. But through all this storm of feeling she steadied herself with one thought—the thought of Harry Lester. Gradually she became a little more composed, she felt that her strength was returning; she did not believe in Carryl Crittenden's love, she convinced herself that this was mere acting, that all he wanted was to distance his young rival, and afterwards to be able to boast of a love to which he attached no real importance. In this, as it happened,

she partly wronged him; but no other train of thought would so quickly have brought back self-command. After the first rush of feeling, over which she had no control, and which she herself scarcely knew whether to call, in a singular way, pleasurable or exquisitely painful, the one sentiment which she entertained for Mr. Crittenden was—indignant contempt. Armed with this contempt, she no longer felt afraid; her courage rose to the level of the occasion. All these contradictory phases of mind occupied less time than has been needed to describe them. Perhaps if she had ventured to look at Carryl Crittenden at that moment, if she had seen the expression of his face as he pleaded with her, she would have been less positive that he was simply acting; whatever his feelings had been before that moment, or would be afterwards, he was then very much in earnest. The first part of his passionate, broken words she, in her confusion, had only half heard, but the tone of the low vibrating voice had sufficed to move her strangely; now, however, feeling more sure of herself, she listened.

“Louie! will you not speak to me? You do not stir from your statue-like attitude! are you indeed a cold statue instead of a woman with heart and feeling? is there not power in all the

force of my passion to move you? Louie, hear me! I love you—I love you so madly that if you do not speak, if you do not give me a word or a look to live on, I shall take you in my arms, exulting in my man's strength, and fly with you to some corner of the earth where none shall dare dispute my right to you! There, now you move!—My darling, I have frightened you—I have not dwelt enough on the respect which has grown up side by side with my love. See, I leave you free—do not fear me!” and as he said this he stepped back. “I am listening for the first sound of your dear voice; I shall guess from it, with a lover's intuition, whether I may hope, or whether I must indeed despair—Louie, have some pity on me!”

“I scarcely understand——” began she, trying in vain to steady her voice.

“No—but I can explain all. I know what you would say, you would accuse me of treachery toward Harry Lester. To all such accusations I have one answer: I love you—that covers all things, excuses all things. How could I help loving you? seeing you each day, each day I discovered new qualities, new charms in your nature of which you yourself were unconscious. Ah, Louie, love is above friendship, above truth, above honour! Besides, he does not know

how to value you—his passion is as a child's compared with mine!" He thought he was triumphing, but, clever man though he was, he was mistaken—he should not have named his friend, it gave Louie courage and strength.

"It all seems so strange!" she said, more steadily than before; "why should you, rich, independent, accustomed to see beautiful women to whom society has given polish of manner, wish to——" she hesitated a moment, then went on with an effort, "wish to marry a nameless girl who could bring you neither fortune nor beauty?"

At these words, uttered simply and quietly, the man of the world felt that in this shrinking, frightened girl he had found no mean adversary. The simple, straightforward interpretation which she had given to his declaration of love was all the more clever that it came from her lips, as a matter of course. It was his turn to hesitate; he would not give up the advantage which he fancied that he had already gained, but, to marry her, to commit the very folly from which he had determined to save his young friend—that was another thing! should he try and blind her with ambiguous phrases? no, she was too clear-sighted to be so blinded.

After all, a promise of marriage given without witnesses was no very compromising affair; such promises were made to be broken. A moment after the last vibrations of Louie's voice had died away his resolution was taken; this man's passion was too strong for real prudence.

"Listen to me, Louie: give me but your love, dear, that love which I crave with a fervour of which you can form no idea, and I promise that indeed you shall be my wife."

Louie left her place among the rocks, and stepped on the path which led to the house, before answering. She was completely mistress of herself now, and, looking back towards him, while she drew herself up with a dignity which he had never seen before, she said,—

"And I, Mr. Crittenden, refuse the honour you so condescendingly offer me. I will not be your wife!" Then she grew frightened at the effect of her words. Carryl Crittenden, who had followed each of her movements with eager eyes, and who had felt certain of a very different answer, started violently, while his face underwent an almost convulsive change. He had been beaten on his own ground by that innocent-looking, simple girl—he, the man of the world—he, reputed to be irresistible, and who, a few

minutes back would willingly have staked all he possessed in the world on the chances of his success ! A deep oath rose to his lips, and an expression of revengeful hatred replaced the lover's glance. Had Louie faltered before his look, it might have gone hard with her ; but she had withstood his love, and, arming herself with desperate resolution, she now withstood the fury of his wounded vanity. In spite of himself he submitted to the ascendancy of the clear, unwavering glance which never flinched before his. At that moment she felt by instinct, rather than saw, that Marianina was coming to meet her ; this gave her assurance to say, quietly, but with a dash of irony which cut her hearer to the quick,—

“You counted rather too much, Mr. Crittenden, on my lonely and unprotected position ; you counted also, perhaps, too much on those advantages of manner and appearance which seem to command so much admiration in the world in which you move ; you thought to find in the unexperienced English girl an easy victim to those fascinations which, as you knew, had rarely, if ever, been brought to bear against her ; but you should have carried your penetration a little farther ; if you had taken the trouble

seriously to study the character of that girl, you would have discovered what perhaps might have astonished you—that she had judged you, and judged you rightly too, even before seeing you; that, dazzled as she sometimes was by your brilliancy, she nevertheless, in her moments of quiet reflection, saw your conduct in its true light; that she even understood the meaning of your magnanimous offer of marriage, and perhaps followed the train of thought which during your moment's hesitation flashed across your mind. Now, Mr. Crittenden, I will leave you to your own reflections."

"By ——! but you shall not!" and, with a fierceness of tone and gesture which showed how bitterly he was mortified, he strode towards her. But Louie lightly evaded him, and called out,—

"Marianina, I want you, my girl!" then, for the first time, Mr. Crittenden perceived that they were no longer alone, that the young peasant, her large eyes dilated with wondering fear, was close to her mistress.

"What is it, Signorina?" asked she.

"Not much, *cara mia*; I was awkward enough to break the pretty water-jug, and I fear Mr. Crittenden is vexed at its loss—see, it broke

into a hundred pieces. Now we will go back to the dancers; the tarantella must be almost over by this time." She spoke rapidly, and the deep crimson of her cheeks showed that there was fever in her veins.

The two young women turned towards the house, holding each other by the hand as if for mutual protection. Before they had taken many steps, however, Mr. Crittenden said, to Louie, hissing the words from between his closed teeth,—

"My time of revenge will come!—as long as I live, you shall never be Harry Lester's wife!"

Involuntarily she shivered and hastened forward.

"Ah!" said Marianina, "that was just like the noise of those serpents in my dream!"

Meanwhile Harry Lester had missed both Louie and Carryl Crittenden; he was just going in search of them when Louie made her appearance; he seemed relieved when he saw that Marianina was with her, and greeted her gaily.

"Well, truant, where have you been? you have missed the most important part of the entertainment—you should have seen the ex.

citement of our dancers when several dishes of smoking macaroni, cooked with tomatoes, in the Neapolitan fashion, were placed here and there on the ground. Crittenden was too wise to change the national customs by such innovations as tables, chairs, knives and forks—they all wound the macaroni about their fingers before conveying it to their mouths. But you are not well—what is the matter?”

“Not much;” and Louie tried to smile, but the deep flush had already died away, leaving a deadly paleness in its stead; she found that she was trembling violently, and that the support of Harry’s arm was almost a necessity; “I am tired—so tired! Could we not go back at once?”

“Certainly, but you must rest a little first. There, you are better already!”

“Yes, I am better;” she said this, faintly, more to reassure him than because she was conscious of really feeling better. The tension had been greater than she had been aware of at the time, and the reaction was proportionally great.

“Where on earth has Crittenden hidden himself? Did you see him in your wanderings, Miss Louie?” then, without waiting for a reply, or

noticing the sudden look of fear which came into her eyes, he added, "I suppose it would not do to start off without him, considering that he has been acting as our host all day; still, if he does not come soon, I shall waive all ceremony. Here, Marianina! hand me that wine; a little of it will do you good, Miss Louie, you are evidently tired to death." Louie obediently drank the wine; soon she was able to look up, and say, with a faint smile,—

"I have frightened you unnecessarily, Mr. Lester, I feel much stronger now."

"That is right. Ah, there is Crittenden at last!"

"Pray do not say any thing to him about my faintness of just now!" she pleaded, hurriedly, her pride revolting at any confession of weakness; then, seeing the young man's look of astonishment, she added, quickly, "he has been so attentive and—and polite all day, that I should not like him to think that I was really over-tired." The explanation satisfied Harry, who gave a little nod of assent.

Meanwhile Mr. Crittenden had climbed up the stone steps and now approached the group. Louie could not but admire this man's superb self-control; he was perhaps a little quieter and

a shade or two paler, but otherwise he seemed unchanged; he spoke of trifles, smiled at his friend's lively remarks, addressed Louie with quiet courtesy, and altogether acted the part of attentive host to such perfection, that the poor girl, with the impression of the scene at the spring still vividly present to her, felt helplessly bewildered. It was a great relief when, at last, the farm-house was left far behind and they were pursuing their way back to Capri.

As they reached the steps Mr. Crittenden purposely stayed behind, and Harry Lester offered Louie his arm. Twilight was coming on fast, and his help was necessary, for in many places there are broken steps, and then the constant exertion of descending becomes before long very fatiguing.

It was with a great sensation of security that at last Louie locked the door of her turret-chamber and threw herself, all dressed though she was, on the bed. The misery of the last few hours pressed hard on her; her strength failed her, and she sobbed aloud in helpless, womanlike fear and sorrow. She did not want to reflect on the day's events, for she knew only too well what resolution must necessarily have come of that reflection. She was beginning

vividly to realize what once or twice had flashed across her mind, and what others more experienced in the world's ways would have known from the first, that is—that no woman, no matter how innocent her intentions, can with impunity deviate from the path allotted to her by custom or prejudice. She had deviated from that path by choosing to live alone, and to enjoy, harmlessly, as she honestly thought, the society of two young men whom chance had thrown in her path, and already the consequences of this reprehensible state of things so strongly anathematized first by Martha, then by Mrs. Cardwell, had overtaken her; she was bowed low; fear had come upon her.

It was late in the night before she could summon resolution to undress; then she fell into a troubled and feverish sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SYREN'S ROCK.

THE next morning Louie was not well enough to get up; the physical fatigue joined to the painful excitement which that long day's events had engendered produced a racking headache and some fever; it seemed as though this child of a dark fate was already being called upon to expiate the gleam of sunshine which had so caressingly rested on her of late. In spite of her resolution to put aside tormenting thoughts until she should be better able to wrestle with them, she kept reverting to all the most painful circumstances of her isolated position, and, as will happen when physical suffering mingles with mental trouble, exaggerated these circumstances until it seemed to her that indeed she had committed an unpardonable sin in cutting herself off from the society of the

Mrs. Cardwells of this world. She, poor girl, had thought to do no harm, her object had sincerely been to make use of her brief summer holiday by improving herself, and by getting such a stock of health and courage as would enable her to face the future unflinchingly, but two persons, notwithstanding the quiet dignity of her conduct, had judged and condemned her : Mrs. Cardwell in words, and Carryl Crittenden in acts—for had he not reasoned, that a girl in her position was a fit object on which to pour his unhallowed homage? Poor Louie! she was bitterly mortified, and from the depths of her humiliation arose a resolution. She knew now that there was but one way of putting an end to these perplexities : to shut herself away from the companionship of Harry Lester, and consequently of his friend, while living so near them was impossible ; and, when she had tried to do so, her attempt at seclusion had, as it were, but given a greater impetus and force to the intimacy which had followed: no, there was but one alternative—she must go back to England, and at once. She fought with all the energy of despair against this resolution, she wanted so to stay! she loved every portion of this rock-island which, to her, had been a very paradise on earth—she

could not leave it—she could not! She pleaded pitifully against the decrees of her own judgment, but she pleaded in vain; as the day wearily wore itself away her resolution became inexorably firm.

In the morning Carmella had come up, and, with many exclamations of condolence, had offered her services; these had been somewhat ungraciously rejected, for Louie was too nervously irritable to maintain the quiet and courteous manner which she usually adopted toward the *canonico* and his niece; but when, late in the afternoon, the good-natured young woman brought her up a cup of very weak tea and some sadly burnt toast, Louie resigned herself to accept these delicacies, and to listen with something like composure to worthy Carmella's chatter; suddenly she listened with more interest.

“Ah! there was such excitement down at the Marina this morning; a steamboat came in and brought a number of fine strangers. You know steamboats at this season are rarities; in the early spring, and in the winter too, they come pretty often, but this is our dead season. I hear that the steamer is to come and fetch this party, and perhaps bring another, in a day or two. It seems that some of these people are

friends of the tall dark Englishman, and that he is to be *sposo* to one of the ladies—such a fine Signorina! *Dio mio!* such laces and ribbons, she could furnish out a shop with the things she wears, one would think! she seems to look down on all the world beside and to think that the poor earth is scarcely good enough for her to tread upon! Our young Signore knows her too, and I saw her smile on him, but it had no effect, he can think only of one thing, and that is that you should not be well—such a good heart as he has! one sees it in his eyes. Do you know, it always seems to me that eyes that are the colour of the sky cannot give any but good looks; the angels in our churches always have eyes painted as blue as—my best china coffee set.” Carmella, a moment at a loss for a simile, had unconsciously hit on one singularly appropriate. Louie could not help smiling, but the smile died away as she hurriedly said,—

“I am glad to hear this about the steamboat; if it should start for Naples to-morrow evening, or even the next day, I shall take advantage of it. I must go back to England immediately.”

“*Mamma mia!*” exclaimed Carmella, too much amazed to venture on any thing but that

national expletive. During two minutes of unnatural silence she examined Louie's face, which was pale and resolute, hoping, but hoping in vain, to read on it the explanation of this singular determination ; finally she ventured to say,—

“Perhaps you have received letters from England?” the fact that the postman never had any thing for Louie had often been discussed by Carmella and her particular friends ; she received but scant satisfaction from Louie's muttered answer.

“Important business requires my presence.”

“But what will our Signore say?”

To this impulsive exclamation Louie, assuming a look of freezing coldness, answered,—

“Mr. Lester need know nothing of my intended departure.” Nevertheless she was quite aware that Mr. Lester would know about it, and speedily, for the keeping of secrets was not one of Carmella's virtues ; perhaps, also, she neither expected nor wished for the discretion which her words recommended ; at any rate, she exacted no promise of secrecy, but continued, after a pause : “I do not know exactly when I shall go, but I shall pack up my things so as to be ready to start at any moment ; I shall be much obliged if you will let me have my bill this evening or

to-morrow morning." All these details were insignificant and common-place enough, but as she uttered these last words Louie felt that her composure was on the point of giving way; she was very cruel to herself.

After some few more attempts to fathom this mystery, Carmella gave it up as a hopeless case, and scarcely dared venture on some expressions of sorrow at losing her boarder, so awed was she by Louie's cold manner; finally she prepared to take her leave, saying,—

"Can I do nothing for you, Signorina?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Louie, impulsively, while a look of terror and wild longing flashed in her eyes, "send me your little child, if you can spare her."

Carmella's motherly heart was touched in a moment, and, forgetting Louie's coldness, guessing too, perhaps, with womanly instinct, at the existence of some sorrow which dared not find vent in words, she put her arms about the pale girl and kissed her heartily; then she hurried away, frightened at her own temerity.

Little Anina had become very fond of the "Signorina," and would chatter to her in her incomprehensible baby-talk whenever Louie had time to listen. Soon the pattering of little

feet, and the fruitless attempt of a tiny hand to reach the handle of the door, roused Louie, who had once more fallen into a fit of musing; she opened the door, and, taking the child in her arms, covered it with kisses; she was fond of children, as all true women are, and in ministering to this little one's pleasure she found relief from her sad and oppressive thoughts.

Louie's preparations for departure were simple enough, but they tired her dreadfully when, the following morning, she began them in earnest; it seemed to her that in the stowing away of one familiar object after another she was putting from her, little by little, that life which, during these bright summer months, had been so precious to her. Her resolution was as firm as ever, and, painful as it was, it made her suffer less than her previous state of cruel indecision had done. The weather, as if in accordance with her mood, had been overcast ever since the Anacapi excursion, and the air had been heavy with the hot African wind. At about one o'clock, however, the threatened storm appeared to clear away, and one breathed with less difficulty. She had reserved the packing of the various

drawings and sketches for the last; as she looked them over each spoke to her of sunny memories, and with a half-bitter pleasure she dwelt on the thoughts they inspired. The reflection which finally came to her gave greater spirit to her poor pale face: "After all, if he really cares for me, he will follow me to England!"

This was a thought which certainly did not seem connected with the sketch which she held in her hand, but it was one which inspired her with renewed hope and courage. As she looked more attentively at her sketch she recognized that it was in a sadly unfinished state, which distressed her, for it certainly deserved a better fate; it was a view from the Piccola Marina, from that very Syren's Rock which had figured as a distant speck in that other view taken from below the point of Tragara on the evening when Carryl Crittenden's note had thrown the first shadow on her happiness. It was still early, and her packing was almost completed. Just at that moment Marianina, who, much to her chagrin, had been denied admittance the day before, came in; she looked with dismay at the preparations for departure which confirmed the rumour she

had heard down-stairs, and silently wiped her tears away. Louie told her that indeed she was going; some of her old shyness of manner came back and restrained the demonstrative grief to which she longed to give way. This suited Louie well, for noise of any kind, just then, she would have found hard to bear. She glanced at the sky—there were still some heavy clouds, the air was still, and the heat intense, but the patient donkey was at the door, and she could not resist her desire to finish the sketch; besides, she knew that the two young men had gone to visit the ruins of Tiberio with the party of gay strangers, so that she need fear no distressing meeting; thus reasoning, she determined to go down to the rock. She now began to wonder whether events would not shape themselves so that she should go away without seeing Harry Lester again, it would be doubtless for the best; she could leave a note thanking him for his courteous kindness which never once had failed her—a polite, ladylike note such as would be most likely to send that unreasonable young man into a violent passion. That would be very proper and right on her side, but oh, how, in spite of her prudence, she longed for some chance meeting which would give her the oppor-

tunity of saying good-bye to him, unwatched by the wicked black eyes of Carryl Crittenden !

When they reached the Piccola Marina, Louie settled herself as best she might, shaded from the heat by her white umbrella, and proceeded to work earnestly. Before long, to her dismay, she found that an all-important colour was missing ; she remembered having taken it out of the box, and by some fatality she had forgotten to replace it ; without this colour she could do nothing more, and this her last afternoon would be lost ; so, giving Marianina minute directions, she dismissed the girl in search of it, then she leaned her head on her hands and yielded herself up to her sad thoughts.

“Miss Louie, what is this I hear ?”

She was startled out of her usual composure when she heard these words uttered close to her. After all, her wish was to be realized, she might take leave of him alone and unwatched ! She tried to speak, to utter one of those common-place remarks which seem to have been invented for the express purpose of hiding the speaker's real thoughts—but she could not ; she was so glad, so unreasoningly, wildly glad to see him ! The reaction from the bitterness of the

last two days was so great, that all she could do was to let him take her hand and then turn away her tell-tale face. As to Harry himself, he was too much out of breath with his quick, hot walk to be able to speak after that first hurried sentence. However, he soon recovered himself, and, still holding Louie's hand, he exclaimed,—

“Tell me that it is all a dreadful mistake—you are not, you cannot be going away!”

“Yes, I must go.” She tried to give great firmness to the words, but, in spite of herself, her voice trembled.

“But why?” He was so much in earnest that she grew almost frightened, she perceived that her resolution, strong as she had thought it, would not long withstand his pleading; she remained silent some moments, then said,—

“Please do not ask me, Mr. Lester—indeed I cannot tell you!”

The sound of approaching voices caused the young man to turn round impatiently; three or four German tourists were climbing on to the rock, speaking to each other in loud, discordant tones, after the fashion of their kind. Harry, it must be owned, at that moment swore a little under his breath.

“Wait!” he said, after a moment's thought,

"you have often promised to go with me to the Green Grotto; this is the very opportunity for which we were unconsciously waiting; in a boat, I presume, we shall be able to say two words to each other with having to fear another intrusion."

"No, no!" hastily said Louie, trying to detain him; but her expostulation was useless; a moment after he had dashed down the broken steps which lead to the rock, and was soon talking with many gesticulations to a couple of boatmen. Evidently, these men were not eager to comply with his wishes; one looked dubiously at the sky, which had once more grown threatening, while the other reflectively scratched his ear. Louie saw all this, and guessed that the offer of heavy pay at last overcame their scruples; despite her better reason, she felt at that moment completely reckless of consequences; she had struggled so long! even at the last moment she had uttered a remonstrance; but the remonstrance had been unheeded, and, come what might, she would not repeat it. So, when Harry came for her, she silently followed him, and took her place in the boat, leaving a message for Marianina with a ragged boy. The water was comparatively calm here, for the

high rocks protected the little bay somewhat from the wind, which was no longer due south, but which seemed to come in short, capricious gusts from different points of the compass.

"I have brought you a rose," said Harry, after a short silence; "I saw it growing in a shady nook of some one's garden and picked it. Roses are rare in Capri, and this one is small and imperfect, but I have a fancy to see it in your hair, Miss Louie." She complied, smiling faintly, and even took off her hat to secure it more firmly; when Harry had critically approved, for indeed the bit of bright colour became her well, they were already at some little distance from the shore, then he said, somewhat abruptly,—

"Now tell me why you have determined so suddenly to leave Capri—surely, surely I have a right to ask!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

LOUIE did not answer at once; her eyes were looking far out upon the water, which, however, she scarcely saw; what she did seem to see, was her fate, and that fate she, in her thoughts, braved with desperate courage. After all, what law, human or divine, forbade her to yield to that love which vibrated in the accents of Harry Lester's voice? It was honest love, love very different from that which had been offered to her by that other man—at least, she would at that moment, have sworn that it was; surely he would not see in her defenceless position, any thing but a still greater claim to chivalrous deference; he would not think that because her life was not the life of other and more favoured women that, therefore, it must necessarily be unworthy of respect; he, at least,

had always been influenced by the quiet reserve of her conduct, and he would not judge her as the wicked, evil-thinking world had judged her; she would trust him, she would not dash from her lips this last sweet cup of happiness! Harry eagerly watched her face and listened for her first words; despite his better reason, he had for the last two days grown madly jealous of Carryl Crittenden, and he was determined to find out, no matter how, whether this jealousy was indeed unfounded, or whether this sudden resolution of Louie's did not cover some scheme of which he was purposely kept in ignorance. At the bottom of his heart he felt that he was wronging her by his vague suspicions, but jealousy is strongest when most unreasonable. At last Louie turned her eyes towards him and said, as quietly as she could,—

“Mr. Lester, if I have decided to go away, it is because I know that it is my duty to do so.”

“Have you received any alarming news from England? is there some dying relative, or some dear friend in trouble who claims your presence?”

“No,” answered she, with a return of her old bitterness, “there is not one creature in Eng-

land who would miss me if at this moment I were swept from the face of the earth. I have no relative that I know of, and no dear friend."

"I am so glad."

"Glad?"

"Yes; glad because—but I will tell you why presently. First satisfy me on this point—why should your conscience so suddenly force you to go away?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Then answer me at least this—is Crittenden for any thing in your decision?" Louie hesitated, then, with a sudden resolution, she said, quickly,—

"Yes!"

Harry started; he dared not continue his questions in words, but his eyes rested on her with an expression which, as it were, forced her to speak. A deep flush rose to the very roots of her hair, but she met his look fearlessly; then, feeling in the midst of her troubled confusion a natural yearning for sympathy and advice, she exclaimed, impulsively,—

"I will tell you all, as to a friend of whose discretion I feel certain. I must go, because he insulted me with his love!"

"Did he not speak to you of marriage?" Harry asked, while his brow darkened.

"He spoke of it," she answered, with a slight but bitter emphasis.

"I need not ask whether—you rejected his advances?"

"I did."

He listened eagerly for that answer, and when it came, low, but distinct, his heart bounded within him; he bent over her, but his words were checked by a peal of thunder, distant but threatening, which caused them both to start. The boat had just doubled the first point, the Marina was no longer visible, and the water was here agitated.

"Signore," said one of the boatmen, "perhaps we had better return."

Return at such a moment—lose this precious opportunity! Harry frowned impatiently.

"How long before the storm comes?"

"It may be half an hour."

"And how long before we can reach the Green Grotto?"

"About five minutes."

"Then go on; we shall have plenty of time." Then he added, in English to Louie, who, in spite of herself, looked a little anxiously at the sky, "Storms in this region either come up in a moment without preparation, or they

threaten a long time before breaking; I should not be surprised if this one were to blow over altogether. Look!" just at that moment the clouds separated and the sun shone down on them brilliantly; there was a lull too in the fitful wind, it seemed as though nature held her breath. The boatmen, half-reassured, nodded to each other and once more plied their oars. Louie now noticed for the first time the grand, savage beauty of the high, rocky wall at the foot of which the small boat was gliding; looking up, she saw that they were overshadowed by the highest point of the island, Monte Salaro, she caught a glimpse of the verdure on the mountain-top, through which gleamed the white chapel which crowns the eminence. The huge wall of rock assumed a great variety of aspects; there were mysterious looking cavities half way up, and grand shaft-like fragments reminding one of cathedral pillars; then the gradations of colour added singularly to the effect—from grey to reddish brown, from dark shades to brilliant light tints.

"I am glad to be here," said Louie, simply, her intense love of nature for the moment overpowering all other feelings. Harry did not immediately answer her, he was looking towards another point or tiny cape which they were

approaching, and beyond which he saw that the waves were tossing, while some were crested with foam, yet apparently there was scarcely any wind, it seemed as though a distant storm had lashed the sea into fury, and that this fury had come to die at the foot of the Capri rocks. Harry looked up; the sky just overhead was of the purest blue; he glanced at the boatmen, but they, urged on by the prospect of the promised reward, kept steadily to their work—had they seriously apprehended danger, not even the prospect of exorbitant pay would have induced them to risk their lives; so reasoning, the young man once more turned to his companion.

“Yes,” he said, in answer to her remark, “it is good that we should be here, you and I, in this temple of nature, with the vastness of the open sea round about us, with nothing to remind us of the miserable littlenesses of life.”

Louie felt, as she looked about her, while she listened to his voice, that the last two days had been a bad, miserable dream, and that now, at last, she had awakened to her true life. Meanwhile they were doubling the little cape, the boat danced on the waves, and for a moment or two the boatmen had to strain every muscle to make any progress. Harry took Louie's

hand and held it, as though to give her courage ; once the point left behind, the boat went on well enough. Here the rocks assumed yet another aspect—instead of the abrupt perpendicular, though broken and rugged wall, which arose from the water sheer up to the mountain level, they formed here a huge cavity which, as one approached, assumed a wild resemblance to some old church choir.

“ *Eccoci !* ” exclaimed the elder boatman, as he guided the boat nearer and nearer to the rocks where the water was calm.

“ But I see no grotto ! ” remarked Louie.

“ Did you not know that this, though called a grotto, is in reality only a sort of indentation in the rocks, at the extremity of which there is a small arched opening under which a boat can pass ? It is some peculiar reflection of light thrown from rock to rock which causes the water to assume its green colour ; here, as you see, the waves are rather of a deep blue, like the *lapis lazuli*. How insignificant the architectural genius of man seems, as compared with those grand masses of rock which in their very wildness—in their apparent disorder—assume shapes of such magnificence ! Now look, Miss Louie, we are entering the grotto.”

As they glided under the arched rocks Louie uttered an exclamation of pleasure as she looked down into the water, which was of a transparent, pure green, like the green of a clear emerald. At the extremity was the small arch of which Harry had spoken. On each side the dark rock rose, giving value to the exquisite lucidity of the water.

"This is wonderfully beautiful!" she exclaimed; "to me it gives a far greater idea of the wild magnificence of nature than did the Blue Grotto; then the approach to this is so much grander!"

But Harry was not thinking of the respective merits of the Blue and Green Grottos; he was looking earnestly at her, and finally said, in a low voice,—

"When you formed your determination, did it never strike you that you were guilty of a sad want of confidence in me?"

"God knows," she said, evading his question, "that I have tried to do right!"

"But God does not require the sacrifice of the happiness of two lives for an imaginary duty. Louie, you shall not go! Have these months taught us nothing? Has not every thing tended to show that—we love each other?"

Why do you shrink away?—surely there is no harm in that? Since your image has taken possession of my heart I have been swayed by higher motives; I have been less a trifle on the face of the earth than I was before I knew you, and every sentiment which ennobles must necessarily be in itself good and noble. Tell me, dear, am I presumptuous in believing that the love I feel for you is echoed in your own heart?"

She could not speak, but for one moment her eyes, tremulously lifted, met his. He was answered.

"*Sant' Antonio!*" exclaimed both the boatmen, in one breath, while each seized his oars. A sound had reached their ears—a sound whose significance they instantly understood.

"What is it?" asked Harry; "the sky over yonder is clear enough."

"Yes," answered the man nearest him, in his strong dialect, "the storm we were watching has passed off, but the noise we hear is the noise of the African wind. It comes without warning and with infernal force. In five minutes the sea will be foaming. The last time it came a fishing-boat was overturned before it could get to a place of safety. There were

three men in it, and they managed to tie themselves with ropes to the upset boat. One, an old man, was beaten to death by the furious waves, another was badly bruised, and the third escaped uninjured—he was young, and thought too much of his own safety to endanger it by helping the others. As for us, we may be just in time to get back to the Marina before the wind is on us—if not——” and he shrugged his shoulders.

“*Zitto!*” exclaimed Harry angrily, for Louie, though she had not understood all the man’s words, had caught enough of his meaning to cause her to turn white with terror.

They were now once more out in the open sea. The water was scarcely more agitated than before, but the ominous sound of the wind became each moment more distinct. The two men, saying a few words rapidly to each other, rowed with desperation, and cleared the first point. Here a gust of wind met them; the bark danced up and down on the turbulent waves, but still they went bravely on; great wind-clouds of wild ragged shapes began to cover the sky. Every few minutes the two men turned their eyes in eager questioning of the line of surf which marked the next jutting point which

they had to pass; that difficulty once overcome they would be comparatively safe, for the landing-place was at but a short distance from the point, and the little bay of the Marina was, owing to the shape of the rocks, somewhat sheltered from the wind. But in doubling the cape there were two kinds of danger to be apprehended—the waves were already beaten by the wind into white fury, and, beside, the boat would have to pass between two rocks whose black heads were only now and then visible above the tormented waters. Harry put his right arm about his companion and tried to cheer her with words of encouragement. Louie understood the danger, and kept her eyes fixed on the foaming line. She was pale with natural fear, but she remained perfectly still, uttering no sound. Minute by minute the boat came nearer, and already the waves were so high as, in her unexperienced eyes, to threaten imminent destruction to the frail bark. The point was almost reached, the men with a common effort were preparing to push their boat in the midst of the white-crested waves, when a gust of the terrible wind came roaring to meet it, and in an instant the water dashed over the boat, drenching those who sat in it. It shivered like

a live thing, but righted itself almost immediately, and the rowers, with a dull cry, sent it once more back toward the less agitated part which they had just left.

"*Madonna mia!*" said one, hastily crossing himself, "we came near ending all our lives there!"

"What is to be done?" asked Harry, as calmly as he could; "it is evident that we cannot double that point."

"That is proved," observed the elder of the boatmen, wiping the dripping perspiration from his face, "and it is as likely as not that in five minutes the sea here will be as fierce as it is yonder. Our only chance is to get well beyond that other point which we passed a little while back, there the rocks will protect us for the time being at least—but then, with this sirocco, which shifts and turns before one can make the sign of the cross, who knows where we can find safety?"

"Can we not land somewhere?" asked Harry, more and more anxious, and repenting bitterly of his reckless imprudence.

"Land!" and the word came out with a sort of savage laugh, "you see this wall of rock—can you climb it? There is the Red Grotto a

little beyond the Green one which might offer refuge in moderately bad weather, but not in a storm like this; then at half an hour from there is the Limbo point, where one lands to go up to Anacapri, but there is no *calle* there, and one has to jump from the boat to the rocks; however, small as the chance is, we must try for it." Then came a silence broken by the plash of the oars, by the noise of the water which grew more unquiet every moment, and by the rushing sound of the wind, from which, however, they were as yet tolerably sheltered. Presently they once more came in sight of the Green Grotto. "You see that light-house yonder?" said the man nearest them, speaking by jerks so as not to allow the exertion of using his voice to interfere with the strong, regular pulls at the oars; "that is the Limbo; it may be that we may reach it in time. The boat will have to be sacrificed, however," insinuated he, even in that hour thinking of this possible material loss.

"As to that, the loss will be made up to you; only get us out of this danger, and you shall have money enough even to satisfy your covetousness."

"To say nothing," muttered the man, "about

the pleasure of saving one's own skin. It was not we who urged going out to sea with a storm in the air."

There was justice in this, and Harry did not answer; he looked down at Louie and said,—

"I have brought you to this, my poor love!"

She tried to smile, but her colourless lips almost refused to do their office. At last she managed to say,—

"Do not fear for me; I shall try and be very brave." And indeed, though she was cold with fear, she yet felt through the pangs of that fear an ineffable sense of comfort and reliance in the strong encircling arm of her lover.

They came nearer and nearer to the lighthouse which seemed a beacon of hope to all these straining eyes, but gusts of fierce wind became more frequent in spite of the high wall of sheltering rock, and the waves grew stronger every moment. It soon became evident to Harry's mind that the landing would be impossible; the boat would be dashed to pieces against the rocks before the most active among them could jump from it. Louie, however, who had less clear an idea of the landing to be effected, looked towards the lighthouse with renewed hope. There are few more dreadful

things than the silence which comes over human beings in the presence of a great danger; this Louie felt acutely—she tried to break it, but could not; she looked up at Harry and found that he was no longer watching the Limbo, but that his eyes were fixed on her with a yearning and tender pity; then she knew that his hope was dying within him; in spite of herself she shivered—life had only just begun to assume a deep meaning to her, and it was hard to think of yielding it up.

The boatmen had counted more than Harry on the possible landing; almost unconsciously they had said to themselves, that even if the *forestieri* lacked the strength to spring on to the rocks, they themselves might find safety there, even should they be forced to abandon the boat with the two helpless young people in it—after all, self-preservation is the first instinct of man—but before long they understood that there was no hope there even for them; then each man uttered a cry of despair which struck on the two listeners' senses like the voice of fate.

“*Dio mio!*” said the elder of the two, “I have a wife and five small children who will starve if I am taken away.”

"And I," muttered the other, a young man full of health and strength, "was to have been married next week; my *sposa* is the prettiest girl of the *paese*, and she will tear out her long black hair and cry all the brightness out of her eyes, for we love each other well!" and both men turned their eyes toward the young stranger who had brought them to such danger. He became deadly pale, but, soon rousing himself, and seeing that some strong will was necessary to sustain the courage of the poor fellows, he said, in a firm, clear voice,—

"Look you, my men, let by-gones be by-gones. I do not believe that we are in such deadly peril as you seem to think; a boat of this size skilfully managed can live in a sea far more agitated than this; then, after we are once more safe on land, you shall have a reward such as will ease you of your cares for many a long day. Now let us see what is best to be done."

A short consultation followed; Harry's confident manner inspired the boatmen with renewed courage, and his promises were not without effect even at such a moment. It was agreed that the best chance of safety was to gain the open sea, for in hugging the coast, with a strong wind, there was always danger of

being dashed against the rocks; then it was decided to direct the course of the boat towards the other side of the island, to reach if possible the Marina Grande, where the beach is broad and unimpeded by rocks, and where, in case of need, help might come to them. It would take nearly three hours to accomplish this, but it was the best, perhaps the only chance. It was evident that the wind-storm was rapidly gaining on them and would soon burst in all its fury.

Louie had not understood much of this talk, but seeing that the men began to handle their oars once more with energy, and that their faces, though grave and stern, had lost their despairing look, she felt comforted. Harry smiled upon her, and explained the resolution just taken in a few quick words.

“What are you doing?” she asked presently, for he had picked up a rope from the bottom of the boat and tied it firmly about her waist, afterwards securing it to his own person. He did not answer immediately, he tried by his firm, bright look to give her courage, but he could not blind her to their danger; then he whispered, touching the cord that bound them one to another,—

"Mine, in life or death."

A slight convulsive sob half choked her, and then she said, piteously,—

"And must I die—now?"

He tried to comfort her, and exaggerated bravely their chances of life; her head rested on his shoulder, and her woman's weakness found its natural vent in a few tears. Then soon she lifted up her face and said, with a half-smile which she tried to make very brave, "I am not afraid any more, Harry!"

It was the first time she had called him by that name, and it moved him deeply.

Another half-hour passed, and minute by minute the sea became more furious, for the wind was now on them in all its dread force; still the boat made good progress and rode over the waves gallantly. Then there came a time when the storm was at its fiercest; between two huge waves would come a gulf which threatened instant destruction to the little bark; it would rise from the danger shuddering, dripping, but still safe. Louie was drenched with spray; her light summer-dress was but slight protection to her, and even the coat which Harry had wrapped about her was wet through; she was very pale, but she no longer trembled. Harry held her

firmly, himself grasping the edge of the boat, for there was constant danger of being washed overboard; she knew that each moment might bring death to both of them, but the first violence of her fears had left her; she was composed, and, in the midst of the rushing noise of wind and water, found quietness enough to taste the wild happiness of a first love.

"This is dreadful for you, my darling!" said Harry, after a long silence; he had noticed that her lips were moving as if in prayer, and he thought that, perhaps, she had given up all hope.

"No," she answered, simply, "it is not as dreadful as it seemed to be at first; I have found strength to pray, Harry," she added, impulsively; "let us be united in that also; pray with me!" then she uttered aloud the simple words familiar to her from her earliest childhood, and the young man, bending his head reverently, repeated them after her.

CHAPTER XVII.

MY PROMISED WIFE.

WHEN Marianina reached the Piccola Marina with the missing colour and was told that her Signorina had gone to the Green Grotto, she sat down with the uncomplaining patience peculiar to her class, never presuming to question Louie's conduct or even to reason about it. She was roused from a state of half sleep, into which she soon fell, by the rising of the furious wind. As even more terrific in its suddenness than as witnessed from the Green Grotto, which, as we have seen, was shielded from the first violence of the storm. About the Piccola Marina itself, protected as it was by the high wall of rock, the waves did not at first rise to any great height, but just beyond the sea in less than five minutes was violently agitated; to the left, at some little distance,

where the Faraglione rocks rose high and bold against the sullen sky, the storm broke with its greatest fury, and the foam licked the sides of huge masses as though indeed the waves in their wild anger thought to annihilate them.

“*Dio mio!*” exclaimed the poor little peasant, straining her eyes in the hope of seeing the boat turn the point while yet there was time. But she strained her eyes in vain; she stood some time watching the progress of the storm in dumb terror—born and bred in the island, she had seen many such a sudden whirlwind, and knew, that of all the dangers to which their hardy fishermen are exposed, this is the most treacherous. Soon, as she saw the line of white foam which marked the point, she knew that there was no further use in watching; that no boat as small as the one in which her beloved young mistress was could live in such a sea. Then, distracted, she went from one fisherman to another, wildly asking for help which she well knew could not be given; the men looked at her, shrugged their shoulders, and talked among themselves with many gesticulations. The scene then became one of dire confusion. The wife of the elder boatman, with her children; the bride of the younger one, with their nearest

female relations, all rent the air with their shrill grief. Sorrow in these southern natures is incompatible with silence, and a widow or orphan weeping quietly would be accused of insensibility. Whoever has assisted at the lamentations over a dead relative will be convinced of this; the screams, the wild sobbing of the dishevelled women, are things not easily forgotten; even as I write the remembrance of such a scene comes back to me, and the echo of those dreadful wailings chills my blood. More than an hour passed in this way; the cries of the women mingled weirdly with the roaring of the wind and the booming of the dark, foam-crowned waves, as they broke wildly over the Syren's Rock. Finally, the oldest and most experienced of the fishermen guessed at the only chance of escape for the little boat, and told the others that watching from that side of the island was worse than useless, and that if ever the bark was to greet their eyes it would be from the larger, safer harbour of the Grande Marina.

Marianina, mechanically faithful to her duties even at such a moment, picked up Louie's different artistic belongings and, driving the donkey before her, ascended the steep, broken path.

which leads up towards the village; the wind was so violent that it rendered the ascent difficult, but she struggled on, followed by the other women and a few fishermen; it was a doleful procession.

At the Marina Grande, though here the storm was felt with less violence, the scene was one of indescribable confusion; the fishing barks that always encumbered the beach were all dragged high on the dry land, and as Marianina reached the place the excitement was at its height, for the large market-boat which had started for Naples some hours before had been forced to turn back, had ridden gallantly into harbour, and was now being dragged high on the beach by its skilful seamen. For a bark of that size the danger had not been great, but when the people about heard that a small boat was out in that furious sea, the excitement grew intense. The frenzied fear of the women nearly related to the boatmen gained all their friends, for in a small place like Capri the interests of one become the interests of all, and soon the cries augmented; some women threw themselves on their knees and prayed aloud, others, wandering helplessly here and there, uttered dismal moans, tearing out their black hair; but

Marianina, who was well nigh exhausted by fear and grief, crouched down on the stones in an attitude of utter dejection, her eyes fixed with a despairing look on the threatening waters, while the spray of the waves came up and licked her brown bare feet.

"Is it true that they are out at sea?" asked a voice close by her. Mr. Crittenden stood over her, almost breathless with the haste he had made, and pale with the horror of the news which had just greeted him. Marianina looked up at him, the terror in her eyes answering him better than words could have done; then, as though his question had brought back the bitterness of her grief, she wailed out, "I shall never see her again—my dear *padrona*!"

Mr. Crittenden turned abruptly away, but did not immediately rejoin the group of friends who stood at a little distance. He bit his underlip furiously; if he cared for any one being on earth, it was for Harry Lester, yet fears for him were scarcely his uppermost thought; the common danger he guessed would accomplish in an instant what under ordinary circumstances might yet have been averted, and thus, even in death, Louie would triumph. Wounded vanity in this man took the proportions of a mighty

passion; in his blind hatred for this girl—love like his turns with marvellous rapidity to hatred—he deemed no fate too cruel, only he would have wished her to bear that fate alone, not encouraged by Harry Lester's words of love.

"Well," said a tall dark beauty, as Mr. Crittenden at last came up—she formed the centre figure of the group of friends just alluded to, "is Mr. Lester really out at sea?"

"Yes," answered he, shortly.

"Oh, how dreadful!" exclaimed several voices. A few among these fine people doubtless felt real pity for the bright, clever young fellow who had left them but a few hours before; others, possibly scarcely acknowledging it to themselves, felt that the thought of his imminent danger, of his possible death, added a strange zest to the magnificent spectacle of the storm; among these was the tall beauty, who, trying to secure her flowing draperies with which the wild wind played most unceremoniously, added, with marked emphasis,—

"I—hem! understand that a young woman is with him?"

"Yes;" and this "yes" was even shorter than the last.

"Are they—engaged?"

"Engaged!" he sneered, "Lester would scarcely be fool enough to engage himself as future husband to a girl living alone, and of whose antecedents almost nothing is known." It was a cowardly thrust, and no one knew it better than he.

"Oh!" and the young lady managed to insinuate in that expressive monosyllable a world of scorn.

"Miss Farland," remarked Mrs. Cardwell, who was of the party, "certainly seemed to be a respectable young person before she adopted her present reprehensible style of life."

"I think this is shameful!" exclaimed another lady, a young wife whose heart was warm and brave; "all that I have heard of this girl is to her credit, and I feel sure that she is worthy to be Mr. Lester's wife: even if it were otherwise," she added, in a softened voice, "surely at a time like this one should forget it!"

Mr. Crittenden glanced angrily at the speaker; then, assuming an impenetrable smile, he bowed before her, casting at her a look of such cynical meaning that, in spite of herself, the young woman blushed.

Before long the wind went down, almost as

suddenly as it had risen, and the waves, though still wild, began by degrees to beat less furiously against the shore. The time seemed very long to the eager watchers : the women's faces looked haggard, and their black hair streamed wildly about their shoulders ; but their grief was less violent—the storm of fear, like the storm of wind, was dying away.

At last the setting sun flooded the clouds that hovered about Ischia with a red like the red of blood. Many of the people had gone to their every-day occupations, having given up all hopes of seeing their comrades and the two rash strangers again ; but others still lingered scanning the dark waters. The party of ladies and gentlemen sat at a little distance from the groups of peasants and talked among themselves. Finally the tall beauty rose, saying,—

“ I, for one, am worn out, so I shall return at once to the hotel. As to the hope of ever seeing that unfortunate young man return safe and sound, I think it is simply chimerical ;” and she gracefully threw an end of her white cloak over one shoulder.

She was very fine looking, and, as she studied her movements with great care, after the fashion of other actresses, she rarely placed herself in

any attitude that was not easy and artistic. Carryl Crittenden, from his recumbent position, scanned her with lazy approbation.

At that moment a loud, thrilling cry startled them all. As they looked, they saw that Maria-nina had sprung up and was running along the shore in wild excitement. In looking fixedly toward the horizon she had perceived a black speck dancing on the waves, and she never doubted for a moment that it was the boat so eagerly, so almost despairingly, looked for. As by magic the beach was once more a scene of confusion, Mr. Crittenden, who had had the precaution to bring a strong glass with him, looked through it long and carefully. He was, before long, surrounded by a crowd of fisher-people, kept quiet by their intense anxiety. It was some time before he spoke. The boat was still so distant that at first he could distinguish nothing definite; then he took a long breath; his swarthy complexion became blanched, for he saw more than he wished to see, and it was with a strong mixture of emotions, which made his voice sound strangely forced, that he at last said,—

“Yes, it is they!”

Loud and heart-stirring was the shout that rose from the expectant crowd.

Soon he was left alone, for all rushed hither and thither, carrying the welcome news to friends and relatives. He seemed for some moments lost in thought; he felt that this great danger endured and overcome together would form a bond of union too strong for him to break; yet his vengeance must be accomplished! His plans had been overturned by Louie's disdainful rejection of his love; and, though since he had thought and schemed incessantly, nothing definite had as yet formed itself in his brain. But this favourite of fortune, in spite of all, trusted to chance. Mechanically he put his hand in his pocket and played with some letters given to him by the postman about two hours before. Among them was a large business-like packet addressed to Mr. Lester, which he had volunteered to deliver. A momentary feeling of curiosity had crossed his mind as he looked at this document, for Harry's correspondents were not numerous; and now he took it out and once more looked at it. He, however, merely discovered that it bore a London postmark; further than this the discreet yellow envelope disclosed nothing; so he put it in his pocket again and joined his friends.

Nearer and nearer came the boat, until the

watchers could easily distinguish the four figures in it. Yes, they were all safe! The shouts of joy from the shore were now heard, above the din of the waters, by those in the bark, for a white handkerchief was waved in reply. Then rough men embraced each other and women cried aloud for joy. Preparations were immediately begun for the helping in of the gallant little crew. There was no further danger, but the waves were still high enough to make the coming into harbour a matter of excitement. The two rowers—worn out, as they must have been, by the exertions of the last terrible hours—seemed to have new life instilled into them by the sight of this beloved shore, and by the shouts of those whom they had never expected to see again. They came bravely on, each regular stroke bringing them rapidly nearer the beach; then, as they arrived to within a few rods, two brawny fellows, their short linen breeches tucked up high on their sinewy legs, rushed into the water, ready to throw a strong rope to their comrades, while the other end of this rope was grasped by half a dozen other men, who, at the right moment, would pull in the boat high on the shore before the returning wave could have time to beat

against it. On, on it came! the noise of a few moments before was hushed, all were breathless with expectation—for the varying emotions of the last few hours had brought the excitement of all, even of those unconnected in any way with the two boatmen, to the very highest pitch. At last the men caught, and firmly grasped, the rope, and the two who had thrown it in now dashed still farther in the water, and then, waiting an instant for the coming wave, pushed the boat with the strength of their shoulders, while the others pulled at the rope, and gallantly, easily, proudly the little bark rode in on the wave and was dragged on the stony beach amidst the shouts of the fisher-folk. After this the scene became one of indescribable confusion: the two men were surrounded in an instant; one of them, who till now had retained all his strength, fainted dead away in the arms of the girl whom he was to marry. Marianina rushed towards her young mistress, and for some time was unable to utter a word, so violent were her convulsive sobs of joy; but when she saw that Louie was about to give way also, that the pale face was getting paler still, she recovered herself with a great effort and tended her gently and skilfully. As to Harry

Lester, in the bustle of the landing he had been separated from Louie and taken possession of by main force by his friend. When Louie recovered she whispered to her attendant, with a half-shy, half-proud look,—

“‘Anch’ io sono sposa !”

Then, by the sudden separation of the crowd, the girl’s reclining figure became visible to the ladies and gentlemen who still surrounded Harry Lester. Mrs. Cardwell looked at her with indecision, her Christian charity fighting with her stern sense of propriety. The haughty beauty put up her eye-glass, and looked at her as though she belonged to a curious species with which she was not familiar. Seeing this, the young married lady advanced quickly ; she wanted to say something to prove her warm-hearted contempt for the conduct of those about her, but only common-place words would come to her lips.

“ You must be worn out by all this terrible excitement—can I do any thing for you ? ”

Harry Lester, who had watched the party with flashing eyes, took the brave lady’s hand in his, and said, distinctly, so as to be heard by all,—

“ Thank you a thousand times, Lady Trevilyan, for your kindness to—my promised wife.”

Carryl Crittenden bit his under-lip till the blood came, but with admirable self-command he advanced, said a few words to Louie, then once more joined his own party and walked on towards the hotel.

Louie scarcely knew how it came about; but before long she found herself in her own room, having been, she believed, much talked to by the *canonico* and his niece, forced to swallow some hot wine, and only left alone on a solemn promise of going at once to bed.

What her own sensations were she scarcely knew; the emotions of the last hours had been so strong and so various that she felt stunned. But soon she started from the bed, on which she had thrown herself half-dressed, and, putting a cloak about her, sat down by the window and tried to think.

The storm had passed away long ago, and the sky had resumed its deep, calm beauty, as though such things as clouds were not. The night air was soft and warm, and made the confinement of the room seem to Louie almost unbearable; she felt singularly little tired, and sleep was out of the question. Suddenly the thought of that little quiet nook at the end of the garden came temptingly to her mind. This was a spot consecrated by many a quiet Sunday musing; it was

her resting-place from work and worry, a place where she had never been molested or even discovered. It seemed to her that if she could only sit there half an hour, watching the quiet stars, she should grow more tranquil, and be able, perhaps, to come back with a feeling of healthful fatigue and go sensibly to bed. It was yet quite early, so, quickly making up her mind, she redressed herself and went down-stairs. Every thing was quiet in the house; Carmella had probably gone to some neighbour to gossip about the marvellous escape, and her little child was doubtless fast asleep. As Louie walked down the long garden alley a feeling of perfect happiness and gratitude predominated over all her other sensations; she climbed up to her favourite perch, and laughed softly to find herself there when every body thought her safe in her turret-chamber. Little by little her sensations became less confused; she lived over, hour by hour, the dreadful danger through which she had passed, and above it all the words of love which she had heard sounded like magic music in her ears. Then a bright picture of the future rose before her and some happy tears welled up to her eyes—surely it was false that she was predestined only to sorrow and loneliness! Presently her thoughts once more be-

came indistinct. Once or twice she said, to herself, "I had better go up-stairs;" but she lacked the resolution to do so; the soft night air was deliciously soothing to her. Once she actually made an effort to rise, but she sank back again wearied out, and, laying her cheek on her arm, slept—a smile such as might have haunted her in her childish sleep years ago playing about her mouth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LADY THURLOW'S HEIR.

LOUIE had not slept long when she was awakened by the noise of voices. She started, smiling at her singular position, and was just about to call out, for she recognized Harry Lester's voice, when she was frozen into silence by these words, spoken quietly and distinctly by Carryl Crittenden:—

“But how comes it, Hal, that you did not know that the strange lady who died here in the spring was your aunt Lady Thurlow?”

His aunt Lady Thurlow! Louie pressed her hands to her forehead. Was she still dreaming? No; she knew herself to be wide awake. Then he, her lover, whose words still echoed in her heart—he was the son of that poor neglected sister, the heir to Lady Thurlow's fortune, of whose whereabouts the lawyer had been uncer-

tain. In the whirl of her sensations she did not hear the whole of Harry's answer, but she caught these words :—

“ Besides, you know how secluded I have kept myself here, determined as I was to make up for lost time. As to Lady Thurlow herself, I never saw her. I knew that I had such a relative, and the contrast between her wealth and the poverty in which I had been brought up kept alive in me a bitterness at the thought of what seemed a crying injustice ; that, perhaps, more than all else, wakened in me a passionate craving for wealth and ease.”

“ A craving which now,” observed his friend, “ thanks to that same Lady Thurlow's will, you may fully satisfy.”

There was a silence. The two young men were now leaning against the low wall close to Louie's hiding-place, so close, indeed, that she could hear her lover's laboured breathing. She herself seemed paralyzed ; had she wanted to make her presence known she would have lacked the physical power to do so. With clenched hands and straining eyes she watched and listened, too bewildered at first to reason about what she heard. Presently Harry exclaimed, with his old impetuosity, “ Crittenden,

my brain is whirling! the memory of the storm and of the escape mixes itself with the thought of this astounding news; I cannot think—I do not understand. Repeat it all to me quietly, simply, that I may believe it—all from the very beginning.”

“I can do so in a very few words, my dear boy. The yellow business-like letter which the postman gave me for you this afternoon proved to be from the lawyer of your late lamented relative Lady Thurlow. You are heir to the whole of her large private fortune.”

“The whole of her fortune!” repeated Harry, exultingly; “at last I shall be able to satisfy my love for the beautiful; I shall no longer be a picture-dealer’s drudge; and I shall,” he added, in a softer tone, “be able to offer Louie——”

“The whole of her fortune,” continued Mr. Crittenden, as though he had not heard the interruption, “on one condition—that you should not, like your mother, marry beneath you.”

“Stop!” and Harry uttered this word like a cry; it seemed to pierce Louie to the heart; then there was another silence; it was of short duration, however, for he added, excitedly, “she is not beneath me, no one will dare to say that

she is beneath me—she is a lady in feeling, a lady in appearance, a lady in education——”

“But a nobody by birth.” Mr. Crittenden’s tones were measured and cold; Louie knew that he had found his revenge. “Do not deceive yourself, Hal, the words of the will are explicit; if you marry Louie Farland you must lose your inheritance, for the trustees of the hospital which, in case of your non-compliance with the condition of the will, are to profit by your folly, would easily prove a case against you. I heard to-day some details concerning Miss Farland which probably leaked out through Lady Thurlow’s physician; she is the child of unknown parents—you know what that means. A certain sum was paid yearly for her education and support until she was eighteen years of age; then the agent who had been instrumental in forwarding the money, and who was too discreet to divulge the name of his employer, intimated that no further sums would be forthcoming, as the young lady was arrived at an age when she could support herself by her own efforts. Hal,” he added, after a few moments, during which that young man had seemed too stunned to speak, “do not think that I am hard on you; I tell you plainly, simply, what others would undoubtedly tell you in harsher language.

I feel for you as I certainly should not do had I not had the opportunity of knowing and admiring Louie Farland. You were angry with me when I first came for showing you the folly of your contemplated marriage; then I determined, if possible, to prevent this rash step by gaining her affections myself"—here his voice became husky, in spite of his determination to act the part of a magnanimous and disinterested friend; it was but for a moment, however; he continued quietly and gently—"but I—failed in my attempt. You see, Hal, I have known you many years, and I have loved you well, otherwise you would scarcely receive this confidence, but I want to prove to you my admiration for this girl—I want to show you that it is as a friend that I speak to you, not as a rival. She rejected my advances, and I respect her, I honour her for it."

Louie saw indistinctly that the two men shook hands in a silent way, as men do when they are too much moved to speak. Something seemed to choke her, and a veil of mist passed before her eyes, but she soon recovered herself, and once more she listened.

"Crittenden, what can I do? I am so fond of her—so very fond!"

"As to telling you what course to pursue,

that is what no man can or ought to do; the most a true friend can venture upon is to lay the case before you fairly and calmly, and leave you to decide; that is all which I, in the character of that true friend, will consent to do."

Could any thing be in appearance more fair? could any thing in reality be more treacherously wily? As a lover of Louie Farland, he could have had but little influence; as her disinterested admirer, speaking dispassionately, reasonably, in the character of a true friend to both parties; he had, on the contrary, an immense influence, to which the weaker man yielded, scarcely knowing that he was yielding.

"Do you know to what resolution I was gradually coming when that lawyer's letter changed the whole aspect of the affair? I was reasoning myself into the belief that your imprudent marriage was now almost a necessity; that the drudgery of poverty, that the daily toil for bread, might have a charm, even for one of your easy, pleasure-loving nature, if sweetened by the love of a woman like Louie Farland. You see, though I failed to win much regard for myself during the long conversations which I had with her, I discovered in this girl

strong qualities of mind as well as of heart. But now, you see, the case has changed fundamentally; to struggle on with a beloved wife in poverty towards what perhaps, in twenty years or so, might be a respectable competency, knowing that no brighter fate had presented itself to you, would be a very different thing to such a struggle with the consciousness that ease, comfort, that wealth, in one word, had come to you, and that you had pushed it on one side. There is, I know, a great charm in the thought of a sacrifice made for the sake of a being worthy of it; but what you must ask yourself is this—whether you have strength enough to carry out such a sacrifice to the very end, whether, when the first ecstasy of love has died—as it must die—the calmer affection succeeding it would prove strong enough to counterbalance the loss of wealth, of the power which wealth gives, and the craving for which has been with you a passion from your childhood. You have seen poverty in your boyish home—you have told me so a hundred times; you carry about with you the remembrance of your delicate mother, whose days unquestionably were shortened by the pressure of that same poverty—think well of it. I do not say that the home

to which you would bring Louie Farland need be absolutely poverty-stricken, for you have talent and a spasmodic sort of industry; only, of course, there would be many privations which you would have to endure—and, worse still, which you would have to see those you love endure also; and I know that they would seem a thousand times harder because of the thought, ‘It might have been otherwise!’ You would have to bear the torture of a Tantalus, and, believe me, no devotion, no love could make you forget it. Then do you not fancy that your children, inheriting your love of ease and luxury, would, hearing the story of the lost fortune, learn in time to curse the life you gave them at such a price? I do not speak of the woman called to share your lot, because I know her to be strong and generous; she would suffer in silence, but her suffering would be all the more intense for that; with her clear judgment she would understand the meaning of your careworn look, of the quickly-fading gracefulness of your youth, and she would say, ‘It is for my sake that he brought this on himself,’ and, with one of her stamp, the thought would suffice to bring on weariness of life, and possibly an early death.”

“She should never know of the will!” ex-

claimed Harry, whose impulses at least were generous.

"Yes, she would; you might not tell her, but others would undoubtedly be less discreet."

"What shall I do—what shall I do?" and Harry threw himself on the stone bench despairingly; then soon he turned round once more and said, rapidly, "Carryl, I despise myself for this hesitation—for this miserable weakness! I know what I should say if I saw another waver as I am wavering: I should despise him for balancing between fortune, physical well-being, the favour of the world, and love such as Louie's. Yet the memory of my past struggles seems to come and choke the more generous impulses of my heart. If I had accustomed myself to a simple life—as in my circumstances I should have done—my decision would come of itself; but who does live a simple life in this nineteenth century? or who, living so, does not crave the luxuries of the rich? You see, money means so many things to us: it does not represent only good living, fine clothing, varied amusements; it means the moving with the ease of equality among those born to luxury. I have suffered too much from mixing with those whose tastes were my tastes, but whose

means of satisfying them were a thousand times greater than mine. To undervalue the charms of wealth, to shut my eyes to the true meaning of what I still—God help me!—mean to do: I shall give up my inheritance. Why do you not speak, Carryl? I say I shall give up my inheritance!”

“No, you will not.”

The words were uttered very slowly; and though Harry started as he heard them, and walked impatiently up and down the narrow path, he knew that his friend was right—he knew that he would not give up his inheritance even for the love of Louie Farland: the spirit of worldliness—that curse of modern society!—had taken too early strong possession of his nature. Finally, he said, in a voice tremulous with feeling,—

“I cannot give her up, Carryl, indeed, indeed I cannot!”

“Sit down, Harry, and listen to me—listen to me quietly, remembering that what I say to you I would say to my brother, to myself. Let us talk as man of the world to man of the world, for such we both are. I do not ask you, I do not expect you, to give up Louie Farland—you love each other too sincerely, too fondly, for

that; it would be a sin against nature, and you know Nature is my God, her dictates my religion."

"I do not understand," said Harry, huskily.

"But you will soon. Remember, in what I am going to say I do not forget for one moment, the true worth and nobility of this girl's heart. In dwelling, as I have done, on the fate of both of you in case you gave up this fortune, I wished you to see that for her, as well as for you, it would be a miserable one. Now I turn to another picture, and it smiles on me, for I see there, love surrounded by all the delicate luxuries which wealth gives; I see you happy, I see her happy too—hush! do not interrupt me. She is a Catholic; marry her with the rites of her faith. I know a priest who would undertake to do this. She is ignorant both of our laws and of those of Italy. To her the marriage would be a sacred bond—it would be such to you also, I am sure; but in the eyes of the English law it would be a meaningless ceremony: it could not keep you out of your inheritance. Mind, the condition is, not to marry one beneath you in rank; it does not order marriage with an equal, it merely forbids a union such as brought misery on—your own mother.

You need not live in England; stay in Italy, where Louie would be, to all intents and purposes, your wife."

"By ——! I have listened to you so far, Crittenden, from sheer incapacity to speak. Do you know what fate you propose for this stainless girl, who in all confidence and singleness of purpose has given her heart into my keeping? I reject your proposition; it is as hateful to me as it would be to her!"

"As you will," presently remarked Crittenden, coldly; he felt that, with all his caution, he had advanced too far.

Meanwhile Harry's indignant anger quickly subsided; he was not sufficiently firm in his own purpose to fight to any advantage with his cool antagonist. At last he said, with a return of his old vacillation,—

"Do not be angry with me, Crittenden; I know that from your point of view—materialist that you are—there is nothing very dreadful in your plan."

"I am not angry with you, Hal, otherwise I should not have remained here. You call me a materialist; if being free from the prejudices of a decayed state of society is being a materialist, I certainly am one. Now, it is not my wish to

bring you to my way of thinking; you are old enough, and have common sense enough, to direct your own course. I told you at the start that I would not influence you; I can but suggest such means of escaping from your present embarrassment as may suggest themselves to me; you yourself must judge of the value of those means. Let us return to the straightforward course which a self-called virtuous person would advise: lay the case plainly before Miss Farland, and let her decide for herself."

"You know as well as I do what her answer would be. No, that would be begging a release from my engagement to her; I cannot do that!"

"My dear fellow," retorted Crittenden, with just a shade of irony piercing in his tone, "you are like the child who would eat his cake and have it too. You ask for advice merely to reject it; you want your fortune, and you want Louie Farland: you cannot make up your mind to give up either, yet you go off into heroics at the bare mention of the only plan by which you could enjoy the sweets of riches and, at the same time, the sweets of love. Upon my word, I have a great mind to leave you to puzzle out the question by yourself! whatever I suggest is sure to irritate you." Then, after a pause, he

went on to say, "I have told you, and I repeat it, Miss Farland has won my esteem as well as my admiration; but, I swear, that if you are fool enough to give up this fortune for the sake of marrying her, I will break off our old friendship! I cannot consent to associate with a man who deliberately, of his own free will, secures not only his own misery, but that of the woman whom he pretends to love! Now, I have nothing more to say. Good-night! I am tired of this garden-wall, I do not find that it makes a comfortable seat."

The passionate energy with which he uttered his threat might have told Harry Lester that his cautious disavowal of any intention to influence him in this momentous decision, was the merest pretence. But Harry was bewildered by the rapid succession of events; he could not reason, he could only cling with blind eagerness to his double resolution of giving up neither his aunt's money nor his bride. When he saw that Crittenden was really preparing to go, he rose also, and said, almost humbly,—

"Crittenden, do not abandon me; this evening I am too dazed to think it all over; bear with me; to-morrow I shall be better able to reason with you."

"As to that, Hal, I doubt whether your ideas to-morrow will be much clearer than they are now. Besides, to-morrow the bright eyes of Louie Farland will do more mischief than I could reason away in a week. No, no; let us understand each other before we leave this spot. I have not the pretension to guide you in this matter, as I said before, only I consider that it is my undoubted right to choose my friends and associates, and I will not have it said that first and foremost among these is a man who deliberately committed social suicide. Now, to prevent any future misunderstandings, let us settle that question at once. Are we to continue friends—yes or no? Are you to take undisputed possession of—I do not know how many thousands a year, or are you to wander about for the rest of your days a vagrant, penniless painter? Quick! will you come with me or stay behind, knowing that you have seen the last of me?"

"This is hardly fair."

"Perhaps it is not. But I have loved you, Hal, as I could not have loved a younger brother, and the thought that I may lose you moves me strangely." To describe the charm of his modulated voice, which made of each

word a caress, doubly precious coming from this man of stern nature, would be impossible. The fascination which had bound the boy Lester, bound the man with still greater force; he grasped his friend's hand unable to speak; then, after a few moments, he said, in a choked voice,—

“If I thought she could be happy with me as you describe——”

Crittenden knew that he had won the victory; he took Lester's arm within his, and the two walked away.

Louie, when she heard those choked words, felt that she was about to faint; she uttered a low moan which the two young men, had they been less excited, must have heard; but they did not hear it, and walked away, all unconscious of the agony they had inflicted. With a great effort of will Louie roused her dulling senses; she must not faint, she knew that there remained something for her to do before she dare lie down and die. She tried to raise herself from her crouching position; at first she did not succeed, then gradually something like life returned to her benumbed limbs, and slowly, painfully, she raised herself. All was quiet about her; the stars looked down in their

eternal stillness; there was but the faintest breeze stirring among the foliage. Why was nature so beautiful? and why was life so bitterly hard? With great difficulty she crawled back to the house, which so short a time before she had left full of health, full of a happy trust in the future;—she did not dare think of this, but, shuddering, she crossed the threshold. The door was still ajar, probably left so for Harry Lester's convenience, but the house was dark and silent. She groped her way up the winding stairs—they never before had seemed so steep and hard to mount—and at last she found herself once more in her room, with the locked door between her and the cruel world outside.

CHAPTER XIX.

GONE, LEAVING NO TRACE.

WHAT Louie felt was rather a dull, numb pain than acute suffering; she was stunned, and yet her faculties remained active. She planned her future course quietly enough as she sat on the bed looking vacantly at her trunk which was almost packed; quietly also she repeated to herself, as though she wanted fully to comprehend it, "It is all over—all over now." Then suddenly her brain began to whirl, her thoughts became confused; once more she was in danger of fainting, and once more her strong will conquered the weakness; she rose, steadying herself by the furniture, and lifting to her lips the wine left on the table some hours before by Carmella, she took a long draught of it. Then, putting down the glass and pressing her hand to her head, she said,

half aloud, "I must go to work now." The wine gave her strength, and she moved about the room putting her things in order; she finished packing, locked her trunk, then, sitting down at the table, wrote a short note, merely stating in formal terms that she was called suddenly to England, and that she left the amount of her bill in the table-drawer, together with a small sum as a present to the servant; she gave the direction of the Naples banker who held the money of her legacy for her, and begged that her boxes might be sent there by the next boat. It was singular how, after the great shock she had received, she was yet able to think of all these details; she noticed with a certain surprise that her handwriting was firm and even, and that, as far as she knew, the note was written in correct and easy Italian. When she had finished she looked about the room, and its bare, forlorn aspect, denuded as it was of the many trifles which had given it a home look, struck coldly on her senses. Then she caught a glimpse of her own face reflected in the mirror, it seemed to fascinate her; she went and stood for some moments looking at the ghastly reflection. It was scarcely as though she were looking at herself, so changed was

she ; but she recognized, with a shudder, a look of hardness about the hollow eyes and the drawn mouth which reminded her forcibly of a similar look on Lady Thurlow's face. " When I was your age, I was singularly like you." She remembered those words now, remembered too that she had not believed them at the time, and the conviction that there was truth in them chilled her with a sort of fear. There was hardness in her eyes, and hardness in her heart ; she could not forgive—she could not ! the injury was too deep, it had come too suddenly after the joy of believing herself to be loved. Still looking vacantly at her own image, she noticed that the rose which during all the storm had not fallen from her hair, was now gone ; it was with a convulsive sob that she at last turned away—perhaps her heart was really breaking. Yet her resolution lived through all these emotions, it governed her, and she obeyed it. It was now long past eleven o'clock ; perfect silence reigned every where, the deep silence of sleep. Cautiously she opened the door, softly she went down the familiar stairs that never more would bear her slight weight ; as she went she listened intently, nothing broke the quiet ; she began to be afraid of it and of

the darkness, and to experience a wild desire to scream aloud, but now again her strong will upheld her. The front door was locked, but this she had expected; she felt along the wall and found the key on its accustomed nail; she started as it grated against the rusty iron of the lock, she knew that the door would not open without noise. For some moments she stood trying to still the violent beatings of her heart, then she felt her way to the living-room close by, found the oil-cruet on the sideboard, and, gliding back again, oiled both lock and key; this done, she took the cruet back to its place; all her movements were so stealthy that she made no noise. The door opened quietly now, and she breathed more freely when she found herself out in the vine-trellised courtyard; she knew that the large door opening on the street was only latched, so she advanced with a feeling of greater security.

The village was dreadfully still. As Louie glided through the narrow, passage-like streets, some of them covered, some giving peeps of the star-studded sky, she felt as though she were the one living creature in a city of the dead. In a dull, dazed way she fancied that if one being were left to dreadful life, after the

destruction of mankind, that being would feel just such a sensation of bitter loneliness. Suddenly a wailing cry rose upon the night; trembling with fear, she threw herself against the wall, so that its deep shadow covered her entirely, and the faint, trembling starlight did not reach her. The cry which had startled her was but the cry of a young child awakened by the fear of some baby-dream; and as she pressed her head against the wall, she heard through the half-open window the soft, hushing sound of the mother's voice, as she pressed the little one to her breast. It was the simplest of incidents, but nothing perhaps could have brought more forcibly to this girl's mind that henceforth she was cut off from that world of wide sympathies and affections, which one moment had promised to receive her within its precincts; she was a creature apart, a creature quite alone in the dreary world, and there was no one being, no, not so much as a wailing child, to whom she might turn for comfort.

With a low cry she hurried on, without regard to the direction she was taking, without plan, without thought, guided merely by the same instinct which prompts the wounded stag to seek some lonely place wherein to endure its death-pangs unwatched.

Before long, however, she was forced to stop in order to take breath; she then found that she had left the village behind her, and that she was ascending a stony hill-path. Looking up, she saw the ruins of the Castiglione fort looming dimly against the sky; she presently went on more slowly, following the narrow path; it led up to a sort of small platform made on the level top of a high rock rising sheer out of the water; the rock was several hundred feet high, but still it was considerably lower than the Castiglione fort itself. Louie remembered that she had come here on several occasions to admire the vast extent of the open sea, unbroken on this side by island or shore. There was no parapet, no protection for those who are apt to turn dizzy at the sight of a precipice; she sat down at the edge, and wearily looked out upon the waste of waters beneath her. She was very tired, wearied out in mind and body, and she leaned her head against the rock which formed a high wall on one side of the platform, the side of the hill. It was a peaceful night, singularly peaceful, she thought, as she remembered the fierceness of the afternoon storm, still the waters had not yet subsided into quietness, and the noise of the waves as they dashed against the rocks rose to her ears like a symphony of wild

music. The stars overhead gleamed bright and pure, and below on the dark waters a hundred little lights formed constellations, seeming like those of the sky which, by some freak of nature, had become inverted; these sea-stars were in reality nothing but the lights attached to fishing-boats and used to attract the fish. Louie remembered that often during the summer evenings she had watched these lights, while Harry Lester stood by her side talking in his own bright, pleasant manner. She dwelt on this, but to her own surprise she felt no violent pang of grief; she was only conscious of a dull, aching void. How long she sat there gazing down into the depths of the precipice at her feet she never knew; no thought of a possible suicide came to her—first, because from her early religious training it was to her an idea of unqualified horror; and secondly, because, as has been said, she had not yet wakened to the full sense of what she was suffering.

Gradually the stars grew dim and the fishing-lights went out one by one; then a yellowish white tinge came over nature, and the moon, in its last quarter, rose from behind a hill. The soft mystery of the tremulous starlight vanished; the rocks and the hills became mere masses of

dense shadow, with here and there patches of garish light. The moon, so lovely in its first quarter, so majestic when full, seemed to Louise misshapen in its present state, and the light it gave sickly and full of terrors. A sensation of cold seized her too, and the fatigue of the past day, so crowded with emotions as it had been, began to make itself felt acutely. "Why have I come here?—what was it I intended to do?" and in the bewildered state of her mind she could answer neither question. She had a faint impression that when she left the house she had meant to wander about till early morning and then go on board the steamer, which, to suit the convenience of the tourists, was, as she had heard, to start at five o'clock; but she was not sure that such had been her intention. The one fear that took possession of her now, was the fear that she should be found in the morning, half dead with fatigue and cold, and taken back to where Harry Lester could find her. This fear gave her strength to struggle once more to her feet, she wrapped her shawl about her shoulders and began slowly and painfully to retrace her steps; it was rather from instinct than from any fixed plan that, after traversing the village, she took the road that led down to the

Marina—to that Marina where, before the setting of the sun, she had come in upon the wave supported by Harry Lester's arm. She thought of all this as though it were a pitiful story that she had heard—a pitiful story about some one else for whom she felt sorry. By this time she could hardly drag herself along, and it was only by dint of desperate resolution that she did not fall down on the stony beach and lie there in dull insensibility till some early fisherman should pick her up. She passed by all the silent, shut-up houses, left them behind, and climbed up toward the ruined fort where Marianina lived. When she reached the door it was closed, of course, and for some minutes she looked at it in helpless misery; then, collecting all her strength, she knocked and called out, "Marianina!" As it happened, the young mother had just been wakened by her child, otherwise she would scarcely have heard the low cry; frightened almost out of her senses, she waited for its repetition, then, recognizing Louie's voice, she rose trembling, struck a light, and cautiously opened the door. As she saw her young mistress' pale, ghastly face, she screamed with terror, thinking it her wraith; but Louie stopped her with authority, and said, in low

monotonous tones, as though she were reciting a lesson learned with difficulty, "Marianina, listen to me : unless you promise, unless you swear by all you hold sacred to keep my secret, to hide from all—from all without exception—that I am in your house, I will turn from your door and lie on the stones of the beach, probably to die. Promise this ; and promise also to ask me no questions, to satisfy yourself with the conviction that—that I am unhappy and need your aid."

Marianina, who would have obeyed Louie implicitly under even ordinary circumstances, now went down on her knees and promised, with sobs, all that was asked of her. Then since Louie obstinately refused to take possession of the bed and insisted on occupying the inner room, where alone she would feel safe, she yielded to this also, and, taking all the pillows, sheets, and bed-clothes generally that, in her frightened hurry, she could find, she undressed Louie and laid her down on the improvised bed. The poor girl's chief sensation was that of thankfulness for the physical comfort of her position, and for the feeling of security which this shelter afforded her ; she sank almost immediately in a sort of sleep that looked like

a fainting-fit and remained unconscious many hours.

When Harry Lester was told the next morning by the *canonico* that Louie had gone, he did not believe it—the thing seemed to him a monstrous impossibility. He followed the little priest, who on this occasion was too excited to speak in his accustomed measured sentences, and for the first time the young man entered the turret-chamber. There was the trunk locked, the carpet-bag by its side, every thing was in order; there was no evidence of flurry or confusion—on the contrary, all these preparations for departure were so many proofs of a deliberate and methodical plan. The firm, clear handwriting of the note, its simple and sensible directions, seemed to denote quietness of mind and self-possession; yet the afternoon before Louie had heard his words of love, had clung to him in the midst of their common danger as to a natural and beloved support, and she had acknowledged by word and look how strong a hold he had on her heart; she had found, even with death so near, a great sweetness in confessing her own love for him; and yet, in spite of all this, she had gone, undoubtedly gone, leaving no trace behind her. This was a mystery which

bewildered her lover almost to madness ; he had passed a restless night, tormented by conflicting emotions, and as morning came the strongest of these was certainly contempt for himself. Now, the punishment of his weakness had come suddenly, mysteriously, and with heavy force ; he need vacillate no longer, Louie had put herself beyond his reach by her own act. He turned abruptly from the room and rushed out into the garden. Mr. Crittenden meanwhile, too excited by the long discussion of the evening before to indulge in his usual luxurious habits, had risen early, and on his way to his friend's studio had met Carmella and heard the news. He, too, was bewildered, singularly bewildered ; he had come out expecting to have to fight his battle over again, to have to counterbalance by his arguments, by his fascinations, her powerful influence on Harry, and, behold, the enemy had disappeared, leaving to him the field of battle ! As he turned towards the garden Lester met him ; the young man's face was livid, he tried to speak, but his white lips, though they moved, uttered no sound, in his hand he held a withered rose to which he helplessly pointed.

"For heaven's sake, Hal, what is it ?" exclaimed Crittenden, seriously alarmed.

"She," he at last managed to say, in a hollow voice, "she heard all our conversation of last night. This rose—" here he stopped, choked with emotion, "this rose I gave her; during all the storm it was in her hair—it seemed to me an emblem of our love. Just now I found it yonder at her favourite seat; she must have gone there for rest and fresh air last night when we thought her already in bed, and—and, Crittenden, not one syllable of our talk could have escaped her! Now she has gone. Oh, I think I am going mad!"

Crittenden did not attempt any consolation, he was too bewildered by the unexpected turn affairs had taken. Fate seemed to play into his hands. He had been right to trust to chance; no possible combination of his could have succeeded so admirably. Yet, as he glanced at his friend, as he thought of the agony the poor girl must have endured during that cruel hour, something like a feeling of pity came over him: he had planned a revenge, but scarcely one so complete—so crushing. This weakness, as he deemed it, did not however last long. Harry would be saved from an unheard-of folly, and that was, after all, the main thing. He would suffer a little at first, no doubt; but a year

hence—perhaps even less—he would look back on this event as on a providential escape ; these easy-tempered, sunny natures never suffer very deeply. As to her, it was different ;—but then she should not have thwarted him !

“ Carryl, I must find her, and you must help me. The time for hesitation has passed : nothing on earth shall keep me now from making her my wife. I was a fool—fool and villain both !—when I fancied for a moment that it could be otherwise ! ”

Carryl smiled slightly. He knew too much of Louie’s nature to fear for a moment that, having heard what she had heard, she would ever consent to be Harry Lester’s wife. He guessed that in her nature there was a fund of pride and self-respect that nothing—no, not even her own passion—could shake. He felt sure, also, that she would exert all her intelligence, all her ingenuity, to devise some scheme of escape from her lover. Knowing this, he said, quietly and soothingly,—

“ Yes, Hal, I will help you. You think me worldly-wise and hard, I know ; but you shall find that there is one feeling which will never waver, and that is my friendship for you. Give me your hand, old fellow, I will stand by you in

this trial. Now let us consult as to what had best be done."

Finally it was decided that Harry should hastily put his things together, while Crittenden made cautious inquiries in the neighbourhood. Early that morning the steamer had started with a considerable number of passengers on board, but Harry clung to the idea that Louie was not among them; Crittenden, secretly, was of the same opinion.

As the morning advanced, Marianina grew alarmed at Louie's continued insensibility; it seemed far less like sleep than like a trance, so deathlike did she look. But for her solemn promise, the peasant would have called in help, but this she dared not do. As it happened, her child had a bad cold and was feverish, so that the unusual circumstance of her staying at home had a natural explanation. She was sitting on her door-step, hushing the restless boy, when she saw Harry Lester advancing; she turned pale with fright, for she had rightly guessed that it was from him especially that she was to keep the secret of her signorina's hiding-place. She looked at his pale, haggard face with widely-opened eyes; he noticed this, but merely said, wearily, "I see that you know the

news, Marianina; but what you do not know is, that it is I who drove her to it; if harm should come to her, it will fall back upon my head. But do not cry, I shall find her, be sure of it, and then all will be right!" There was something pitiful in this attempt to talk with a courage to which the whole aspect of the man gave the lie; then he added, looking around the cottage room as though he vaguely expected to find some trace of her whom he sought, "Let me rest here a little while, Marianina, for I am very tired."

She could not answer in words, for she was trying in vain to choke down her sobs, but she gave a little sign of assent, fearing, if she refused, to rouse his suspicions. Harry sat down, and, resting his head on his hands, remained motionless. Marianina suffered bitterly during the half hour that followed; she had to repress her longing to tell the lover that his *sposa* was within a few feet from where he sat. She could not understand the refinements of a position which separated two beings who evidently loved each other passionately, and suffered acutely from that separation; but her intuitive obedience, her entire devotion to Louie, her conviction that the girl's decision, however

strange and incomprehensible, was right and just, kept her silent.

In her trance-like sleep was Louie conscious that the man she so loved was near to her, divided only by a thin cottage-wall? her colour came and went, and there was a quivering of the closed eyelids, but the eyes never opened, and by no sign, no restless moving about, did she betray her presence.

Finally, Mr. Crittenden came to the cottage door, and called his friend.

"Well?" said Harry, looking up with breathless eagerness.

"Our only chance is to go over to Naples immediately, and follow her."

"Then she did go by the steamer this morning?"

Crittenden hesitated; a downright lie was distasteful to him, it was an ungentlemanly thing, so he said, evasively,—

"It seems there was unusual bustle at starting, and I could get no very definite information; but there was a lady closely veiled and wrapped in a large travelling-cloak who——"

"Who was Louie Farland, of course—and think of the start she has on us! the steamer reached Naples long ago, and we are condemned

to go in a slow sailing-boat which, according to the caprice of the wind, may take four, six, seven hours to make the trip !”

“ Yet it is our only chance. I have ordered the boat, and our traps are by this time on the way.”

“ Confound our traps ! leave them behind and let us start this instant ! ”

At that moment Carryl Crittenden caught the expression of Marianina's eyes ; he stopped short in a half-begun sentence and looked at her seriously. The foregoing dialogue had been naturally in English, but the gestures, the repetition of words which much intercourse with English tourists had made familiar to her, had enabled her to understand the drift of the talk. She knew that Harry Lester was hurrying off to Naples in search of the poor wanderer who slept so near to where they all stood. Involuntarily her eyes turned towards the door of the inner room ; that look let Crittenden into her secret ; for one moment he hesitated, but only for one moment.

“ Are you coming ? ” impatiently exclaimed Harry.

“ Yes,” was the low answer, and he resolutely turned away. Marianina's heart beat violently—

what ought she to do? She turned pale when she saw that Harry, after leaving the cottage, quickly retraced his steps; Crittenden also turned and watched. But they need not have been alarmed, he only went up to where Marianina stood, and, saying, "You were fond of her!" emptied the contents of his pocket-book into her hands. There were bank-notes and pieces of gold in the little heap; but she, to whom such a windfall at any other time would have caused inordinate joy, scarcely glanced at it: as she followed with her eyes the retreating figures of the two young men, the look of blanched horror deepened in her face.

There is perhaps but one spot in the sweet island of Capri which is bleak and dreary; a space denuded of vegetation on the slope of a stony hill, where the sea-wind makes a perpetual moan among numberless black wooden crosses. The peasants turn from it in dread; yet sometimes towards sunset one may see a young woman, with little children about her, traverse the field of death and pick her way to the farthest corner. The rough, merry little ones speak to each other in whispers as they approach the place, for they all know the story

of the pale young stranger who died one stormy autumn night in their mother's arms; they know also that it is through her bounty that they are enabled to live up where the olive and lemon-trees grow, and that their father need never more go to the coral-fishing on the cruel Afric coast. By some chance a wild myrtle grows near the cross on which is to be seen one word only, "LOUIE," and in the lovely summer-time its white blossoms drop quietly one by one on the lonely grave, as if in pity for the fate of her who lies below.

THE END.

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